

# **Setting up the New Authorities**

**A handbook for the management of local government reorganisation**

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# Contents

Preface	vii
1 Introduction. The Task of Reorganisation and its Difficulties	1
2 Organisation before the Elections	9
3 The Officer Organisation	30
4 The New Councils	40
5 Setting up a New Management Structure	47
6 Appointments and Transfer of Staff	59
7 The Workload and Reactions of Staff	78
8 Staff Consultation	102
9 Accommodation and Communications	113
10 A Note on Financial Planning and Estimates	120
11 Challenge and Response: Size, Human Relationships, the Public and the Councillor	123
Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation	133
Index	145

## Preface

THIS book is based upon researches into cases of local government reorganisation in the nineteen-sixties. It does not attempt to describe the detailed results of the inquiries. We hope to publish these in a second work in the not too distant future. Here we are concerned with making a practical contribution to the tasks of setting up a new local government system, the problems of which will absorb the energies of many thousands of elected representatives and officers throughout Britain in the coming years. It is an attempt to embody in a programme of action the insights and experience of those who have helped us in the researches.

We are only too aware of the book's limitations. Those who have to grapple with the problems of creating the new administrations will be beset with difficult organisational problems which we can do little or nothing to resolve for them. Indeed, in setting out a global view of the tasks we may be making action more difficult. The administrator, to be effective, has to limit his horizons to cover only the quantity of facts that he can manage. But in doing so he has to select what he regards as important from the unimportant. This act of selection should be a matter of sensitive judgment after an attempt to view the field of problems as a whole. It is to help in this general view that our book is directed, although out of this come many practical suggestions for action.

It is of the nature of an overview that it lacks depth in its parts. We are only too conscious of the tentative nature of many of our suggestions and of the need for further intensive studies in particular areas. We hope that some of our readers will be able to participate in setting up such studies. We are also conscious of the need to deepen and widen our understanding of the problems and possibilities of reorganisation and would welcome information from our readers which would help us to do so.

We are in debt to a very large number of people for help with



## *Preface*

this book. Most regrettably we can name very few of them. Details of the origin of the work are given at the end of the first chapter. We there describe the parts of the Social Science Research Council and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in making it possible. Without their grants we could not have undertaken the research which is basic to the text.

The officers of the Department of the Environment, which has now absorbed the Ministry, have been generous in their help in a period in which they have been very hard-stretched. The elected members and officers of the county boroughs in which we conducted our inquiries—Dudley, Teesside, Torbay, Walsall, Warley, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton—have been most helpful and free with their strictly limited spare time. Many officers completed questionnaires for us. Special thanks must go to the heads of departments, who showed great patience with our stumblings, and to those officers who were given special responsibility for guiding us to sources of information. We made exceptionally heavy demands on the Town Clerks and they were helpful well beyond reasonable expectation. We must also thank similarly the civil servants whom we interviewed, the permanent and branch officers of NALGO and the Provincial Councils, the consultants and the representatives of the press.

An unexpected opportunity to study the problems of the new reorganisation locally arose when the informal joint committee for the new English county proposed for Herefordshire and Worcestershire invited one of us to join a working group responsible for recommendations on the local programme of action. We are very thankful for the ideas and the appreciation of the new situation that this has given us. Drafts of most of the chapters of the book have been submitted to the scrutiny of a number of seminars of chief officers organised by the Institute of Local Government Studies. We must thank all those who made comments then and at previous seminars and courses and gave us help in developing our ideas about the various aspects of reorganisation.

The work of interviewing and developing the research was undertaken by a team of which we were only a part. It comprised, besides ourselves, John Harker and Christine McKee, who helped us as research associates during a substantial period of the time spent on the work, and Margaret Lomer, research assistant. It owes a great deal to their efforts. Mrs. Lorna Crane, as secretary and typist, put our imperfect reports into type with unfailing patience. Mrs Gael Heller was most helpful in preparing the drafts for publication. Dr Hedley Marshall has been closely associated with the work and has helped greatly with his encouragement. He and Pro-

## *Preface*

fessor John Stewart read the drafts and gave us valuable advice. Maurice Sharples' comments and criticisms on financial matters were indispensable in a field in which we can claim no expertise, and we owe other debts to members of the staff of the Institute with whom we have been able to discuss our problems and to research workers outside the Institute who have been good enough to give us their help. To Professor Henry Maddick, the Director of the Institute, we owe not only advice and support but the existence of all the circumstances which made it possible for us to propose and carry through the research and to write the book.

Joyce Long  
Alan Norton

Birmingham  
*October, 1971*

# 1 Introduction. The Task of Reorganisation and its Difficulties

THE creation of the new authorities in 1974 is the greatest and most complex management task that has ever faced British local government. A new system must be planned and implemented to meet increased expectations of performance, and at the same time the old authorities must be wound up and the provision of services maintained without a break.

The arguments given in the reports and government papers proposing reorganisation imply certain objectives for the new authorities. These include:

- (a) the exercise of wider responsibility for the development of their areas as a whole.
- (b) Better communication with the public.
- (c) Greater adaptivity to meet the needs of a society undergoing change at an increasing rate.
- (d) Greater effectiveness and efficiency.

The government white paper *Local Government in England*<sup>1</sup> implies that the new local government structure will facilitate a higher level of local autonomy. The reorganisation will be a most exacting test of the ability of local people to justify that autonomy.

This book is not concerned with how these objectives should be embodied in the organisation of the new authorities but rather with how to achieve the desired change; that is, the immediate practical problems of replacing the old authorities by new bodies which have the capacity to meet the high expectations that must be held for them. It is meant to help people to an understanding of the nature of the problems and so enable them to plan with more confidence and foresight. The City Treasurer of Westminster has said: "The experiences of those engaged on previous reorganisations have shown quite clearly that it was not merely the solution of problems which created difficulties, but the lack of prior appreciation that such problems were likely to arise, which

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<sup>1</sup> *Local Government in England*, Cmnd. 4584, pp. 5-6, HMSO, 1971.

resulted in the ultimate use of expediency rather than planned solutions".<sup>1</sup> This book is aimed at assisting such a prior appreciation.

How well the problems of change are tackled will largely determine the capacity to improve services and the spirit with which the challenge is met. These matters are as fundamental as any that are involved, for the end results will inevitably be determined by the means that are adopted. The values obtained will depend largely upon the skill with which the administrative problems are handled.

It is important not to underestimate the significance and the difficulties of the task. The general philosophy and management style of the new authority will be formed during the transitional period. The new councillors must in the space of a few months create a new management structure, appoint councillors and officers to posts of responsibility in the structure who are able to meet the enhanced expectations, provide from the resources available accommodation and equipment adequate to the tasks, merge the threads of policy and action in the constituent authorities into an overall programme, maintain services and decide the first year's demands on the community under a new system of finance. This is a very incomplete list—inevitably so when all aspects of local government have to be reviewed, and re-established. Behind these tasks lies the need to achieve and maintain a high level of motivation amongst the participants so that the new authorities reflect as nearly as possible the potentialities of the elected members and officers who serve them.

Reorganisation plunges all employed in local government into a sea of uncertainties. The secure expectations about the future, characteristic of the system in the past, dissolve and are replaced by a high level of uncertainty about the future. The jobs of elected members and most of the staff will change and they will have to establish their competence and authority in new work-roles. There is evidence that while many are stimulated by and enjoy challenges of this kind, for many others they may cause unhappiness and frustration. An important part of the management task is to reduce this unhappiness and frustration. This can only be achieved by careful planning which takes the human element fully into account. We shall attempt to give help on staff matters in later chapters. Here we simply mention the problem and summarise some of the difficulties which affect not only the outcome of reorganisation in human terms but which also condition what can be achieved in terms of organisation in the interim period.

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<sup>1</sup> Bowdell, W., IMTA Annual Conference, Bournemouth 1970, Conference lecture paper, p. 2.



#### INTER-AUTHORITY CO-OPERATION

The first difficulties are in the form of hindrances to communication and co-operation. Most members of the old authorities and their administrations will have felt a close identification with their councils' names and interests. Our studies have suggested that mutual suspicion and the tendency to postpone firm decisions and actions through fear of causing animosity may be expected in all cases of amalgamation. In many cases councillors and officers will have fought against the form of the reorganisation in defence of their council and of the council's services which they worked to build up, and against the reorganisation policies of authorities with which they are forced to amalgamate. It will not be easy for them to drop hostile attitudes and master their fears in order to achieve frank discussion and co-operation in the interest of the new authority. Nevertheless, if rapid and effective action is to be achieved it is in the common interest to overcome such feelings and achieve a new identification with the future area and authority.

An additional problem implicit in the situation we have named the "big brother syndrome". Councillors and officers whom we have interviewed repeatedly used the term "big brother" to describe the largest authority in an amalgamation, and it quickly became clear to us from the remarks they made that the name was associated with a pattern of attitudes to be found to some extent in all but one of the cases we examined. The largest authority in a group feels a heavy responsibility for the success of the new authority. It tends to see the new authority as an extension of its own ego. It is anxious to take the leadership and make preparations. On the other hand, the smaller authorities are suspicious that the largest authority is intending to impose its character on the new authority. They are anxious that the new administration should find its own, fresh identity, to which they will contribute an important part. They are therefore suspicious of any assumption by the largest authority that it should take the lead, and they may act negatively if it takes an initiative. The biggest authority is aware of the smaller authorities' fears. It is anxious not to take actions which will provoke a negative response and thereby prevent it from succeeding in its leadership rôle. Such a complex of attitudes can result in stalemate with a general failure to show initiative and tackle sensitive problems. The way through such an impasse lies in coming together, setting aside anxieties and concentrating on immediate tasks. The groups from the different authorities need to gain quick understanding of what each has to contribute and how they can best work together.

Failure to identify with the interests of the new authority can



distort key decisions in setting up the new administration. We shall indicate issues on which experience shows that this is a danger, in succeeding chapters. A smooth transition will require a co-operative relationship not only between those elected members and officers with an immediate responsibility for setting up the new authority but also between them and those in the constituent authorities who are not so directly involved. Early inter-authority collaboration is needed to develop a sense of participation in the new developments and thereby further morale.

#### OVERCOMING THE TIME FACTOR

The second major difficulties arise from the lack of time. The work has to be carried out to remorseless deadlines, and strict programmes must be set early and adhered to as nearly as possible if anxieties and uncertainties are not to be unnecessarily prolonged and key decisions skimped in a last minute rush. Without careful management of the time factor the new administration is likely to take over in an atmosphere of confusion and frustration. In the words of a study group at the Institute of Local Government Studies, it is "imperative for constituent authorities to realise that they will be causing harm to their areas if the time constraints and schedules are not recognised and complied with".

Our appendix gives some idea of the extensiveness and complexities of the work involved. The time available is quite inadequate by normal standards. Chapter 6 shows how difficult it is to achieve early appointments. Our section on the workload on staff indicates how in the past the strain on staff has become intense around the appointed day and persisted for long afterwards. The foundations of the authority and its relationship with the public are laid while officers are under acute pressure simply maintaining immediately essential activities. It is at the time when the new services 'take off' that inadequacy of preparation shows. Insufficient accommodation, choked telephone lines, lack of knowledge of where to find the right officer in an organisation which has a new set of functions and is larger than ever before experienced, staff uncertain of their positions and responsibilities: all these are symptoms of inadequate planning which exacerbate the situation and lead to an initial cynicism about the new authority amongst staff and public.

Lack of time can frustrate the application of the principles of good staff management. If there is not the time to take officers into consultation about their future work, allow them to participate in decisions on how their work should be organised and to make their own contributions to the new organisation, they may begin their new work feeling more like instruments than partici-

### *Introduction. The task of reorganisation and its difficulties*

pating colleagues. If there is no provision for meeting colleagues in advance and no time for training them to operate the new systems they have to make work, they may find the new situation doubly frustrating.

The root cause of anxiety is uncertainty, and this is often the result of failure to make decisions soon enough. We describe in Chapter 7 what most worried staff in the previous cases of reorganisations which we have studied. Not all the uncertainties implicit in the situation are removable simply by making the right decisions. Anxiety about fitting into a larger organisation, for example, may be partly removed by training and by opportunities to meet future colleagues but can only be removed finally by favourable experience. Major anxieties about place of work and nature of new positions can however be alleviated by earlier information.

Lack of time bears directly on the quality of decisions since these depend on the information that can be made available (including what can be obtained by consultation with other staff) and on how far it can be digested and used in planning.

Improved planning therefore depends very largely upon controlling the time factor so that time is available when it is most needed. The first principle to observe is that of a systematic approach. The technique of network planning lends itself to analysing the process of reorganisation and achieving an optimal allocation of time to the activities involved. The second principle is to start early. More time is made available for the final critical stages of amalgamation by starting work on activities as soon as the degree of certainty about the conditions of action makes this worthwhile. Earlier than network and critical path analysis which, it will be recalled, was itself evolved mainly to meet situations of great urgency in national defence, came the method propounded by Dr Alexander Sachs to President Roosevelt in 1939, when it was believed that the Germans were preparing an atomic bomb which might enable them to determine the outcome of the war and it was estimated that it would ordinarily take 25 years for the US to develop a bomb from scratch. "When you start one part of a project, assume you have finished it successfully, and start the next as if you had." The advice was followed and it worked<sup>1</sup>.

The third principle is to spread work so that as much capacity is available as possible. This involves extensive delegation. Most of the activities described can be undertaken simultaneously. The

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<sup>1</sup> Finney, N.S., "How F.D.R. Planned to use the A-bomb", *Look Magazine*, 14 March 1950, p. 25, quoted in: Dale, E., *Planning and Developing the Company Structure*, A.M.A., New York, 1952.

fourth principle is to choose the appropriate agency for each task and not employ a committee or a working group instead of an individual unless there is adequate reason. This is an obvious point but one perhaps easily overlooked in operations of this kind where so much group activity is in fact necessary. The fifth is the allocation of explicit responsibility for oversight and co-ordination of activities. Leadership is needed to see that the programme and priorities are maintained, subordinate responsibilities clearly allocated, communications good, and activities carried out with economy.

#### THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE RECOMMENDATIONS

In 1966 the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Mr Richard Crossman, decided that the mending and patching approach to local government reorganisation which had been typical of government policies since the beginning of the century was no longer sufficient. Royal Commissions were set up with instructions to report with urgency on the structure of local government in England and Scotland. At the same time schemes of reorganisation for local government in Wales were under consideration and it became clear that major changes were in prospect throughout Britain.

We were aware that there had been major administrative problems associated with the reorganisation of Greater London in 1965 and of authorities in the West Midlands Special Review Area in 1966, and that a study of previous cases would be valuable to provide guidance for future instances. A proposal was therefore made to the Social Science Research Council for a study of the process of amalgamation (including major extensions of county boroughs) in the Black Country in 1966. A grant was obtained to start work in 1968 and subsequently the Ministry of Housing and Local Government made an additional grant to enable us to extend the investigation to the changes in the cases of Teesside and Torbay in 1968. The investigation was carried out by a combination of interviewing, study of documentary evidence and circulation of a questionnaire to members of borough surveyors' departments. Two hundred and ninety-three interviews of key informants were carried out, including members of sixty-one local authority departments and leading elected members. By this means it was possible to construct a history of how the reorganisations were managed, identify the major administrative problems as seen by participants in the reorganisation, appreciate the influences that lay behind particular decisions and the attitudes of participants to the problems, obtain an evaluation of how matters were handled from a large number of well-informed participants with differing



### *Introduction. The task of reorganisation and its difficulties*

points of view and collect ideas on how such matters should be handled in future. We also wished to obtain reliable information on what matters most concerned members of staff and how they were affected by the changes, as well as to give a wider cross-section of officers than we could interview the chance to put forward helpful ideas. A questionnaire was prepared for this purpose and circulated to officers concerned with the central functions of engineer and surveyor's departments in each of the seven authorities. Further information is given about this survey in Chapter 7.

We hope to publish a full descriptive account of our findings in the near future, but it seemed a more urgent task to apply what we had learnt in relation to the reorganisation situation to the problems confronting local authorities in the next few years. For this purpose we were anxious to take into consideration experience of the London reorganisation and the views of a wide range of local government officers. Our ideas have therefore been exposed to study in a series of chief officers' seminars and courses of other senior officers held at the Institute of Local Government Studies, and subsequently modified, reshaped and supplemented. In addition we have brought the references to current administrative intentions as up-to-date as possible in a rapidly developing situation so that the information will be as useful as possible.

By no means all councillors and officers whom we have interviewed or with whom we have discussed these matters will agree with every one of our suggestions, and, of course, not all of these ideas would have been practicable in the cases we studied. We have attempted to distil the experience of large numbers of officers in the past and to project our findings forward to the new situation which now confronts all British authorities outside London, but this does not imply that the findings from the past can be applied uncritically or in a rule of thumb manner. The new situation will be very different in its complexity, its conditions and its opportunities. Several new kinds of local authority are being created and each has its own special problems. We have not attempted to take into consideration the particular manner of approach which is being proposed for the Scottish authorities. Neither have we considered the special case of the metropolitan counties which are being founded without the prior base of functions in existing authorities enjoyed by the new counties, boroughs and districts. Nevertheless we hope that our proposals will be suggestive of possibilities and approaches in these cases. The other authorities exhibit wide differences in function, size and other characteristics. Each case is unique and there are no universal prescriptions. The situation will impose its own limitations. But

the cases we have studied in the past all share the same main problems and there is nothing to suggest that these will not be dominant in the reorganisation of the 1970s. Our analysis and suggestions are starting points for thought about the new situation and we hope they will help to establish a useful frame of reference.

We have attempted to make our reference to the policies for the coming reorganisation as up to date as possible at the time of writing. We shall inevitably be overtaken by events and some of the information will be superseded. We ask the reader to make due allowances for his later knowledge. We do not believe however that subsequent developments can alter what we have to say except as regards details, so long as the government's policy on reorganisation stands without fundamental change.

#### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the following chapters we start by describing the form of organisation likely to be required for tackling the local problem of reorganisation before the election of the new councils and detail the nature of the tasks at elected member level (Chapter 2) and at officer level (Chapter 3). We then describe the tasks which will lie before the new council when it is elected (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 is concerned with the problems of introducing new forms of organisation and designing establishments for the new authorities. Chapter 6 looks at the problems of selection of staff for the new authorities and the way in which their rights may be protected and new conditions of service established. In Chapter 7 we consider the workload of staff and their reactions to the uncertainties, opportunities and other circumstances imposed by the situation.

Chapter 8 is concerned with staff consultation, and in Chapters 9 and 10 we look at some of the practical problems of planning for accommodation and making financial provisions.

We wish to draw special attention to the Appendix. We have attempted to set out there what has to be done in those matters which are close to the central management process of the reorganisation. It is a prospectus for action and a summary of the activities discussed in the preceding chapters. It may serve as a guide and a check list, but like the main text it cannot be at all comprehensive. Reorganisation involves every aspect of every service, and it will need to be supplemented by detailed plans for every area of service.



## 2 Organisation before the Elections

CENTRAL government may legislate and make outline provisions for the new authorities, but it must rely upon local people to advise on the special needs of each authority and to set up the new administrations. A local body is therefore needed at an early stage to prepare the way for reorganisation in each locality.

This body must have the support of the main councils whose functions are to be absorbed by the new authority so that it can act effectively for them. It is the first means to create a voice and centre of identity for the new council and to initiate the integration of its services. It follows that all the main constituent authorities should be represented upon it.

The form for this body which has been adopted in amalgamating authorities in the past, which the London constituent authorities were required to set up in 1963, and which is provided for in the legislation for the 1974 reorganisation, is that of the *ad hoc* joint committee. The joint committee is a well-tried instrument to which authorities may delegate any of their powers other than for the raising of funds.

A committee of this kind may be started on an informal basis, it may be purely advisory or it may be given formal powers. Joint committees in the past have been able to play a useful preliminary rôle without any formal constitution or defined authority, but unless they are given specific responsibilities their scope is inevitably limited. The new draft legislation makes specific provision for a joint committee to be set up for each new authority to consider matters connected with the election of the new council, the name of the new authority (in the case of a district), the operation of local legislation and other matters connected with the statutory orders for effecting reorganisation, such as the transfer of property and liabilities, functions and areas of other public bodies and officers, differential rating and matters connected with the Staff Commissions. It is also to consider any other matter, if expedient before the election of the new council, in order to ensure the effective operation

of the council on and after the 'appointed day' for the transfer of services. The Committee is to designate the authority or authorities from which the clerk and the deputy clerk responsible initially for duties in respect of the first meeting of the new council and the initial chairman and vice-chairman and the standing orders are to be drawn.

The scope of such a body is obviously highly elastic and we shall consider later in the chapter many of the matters with which it might be concerned. Although not an executive body, such a committee needs authority commensurate with its responsibilities. It needs to be able to act quickly and efficiently so that it can complete its work in the short time available. If it were required to refer all the matters that come before it back to constituent authorities for formal approval, its operation would be hopelessly cumbersome. It has worked well in the past for the constituent authorities to give such a committee wide scope and empower it to incur expenditure on a suspense account for which responsibility might be apportioned among the constituent authorities in proportion to their rateable values.

#### TAKING THE INITIATIVE

The first problem is one of initiative. The stringent time-table for reorganisation makes it desirable to establish the joint committee as early as it will be able effectively to start its work. There is nothing to prevent the establishment of joint committees before legislation for reorganisation is completed and as soon as the approximate area of the new authority is known or can be provisionally assumed. In the London reorganisation and elsewhere a number of the joint committees pre-dated the statutory provisions. In some instances where common interests have been perceived in advance of government action, joint bodies have been formed to present to central government an agreed case on local boundaries and other issues and these have later acquired responsibility for the arrangements for amalgamation. The main cause of delay in the past has been inter-authority antagonism. There is proof however that even authorities which are bitterly opposed politically and in disagreement over the form of the amalgamation, have succeeded without compulsion in coming together and working successfully towards laying the foundations of a new authority. All constituent authorities must have an interest in studying the problems of the amalgamation and in helping to ensure the best possible outcome if it goes through, even if they are opposed in principle to the form of the organisation and wish to maintain political pressure against it.

The clerks of the constituent authorities will wish to make the preliminary arrangements for the first meeting of the joint com-

## *Organisation before the elections*

mittee as soon as any political obstacles have been removed. Consultation with the political leadership will show whether it will be necessary to hold a preliminary meeting of representatives of the constituent authorities to determine the constitution of the new authority, or whether this stage can be by-passed and arrangements made which will enable the joint committee to meet immediately.

### SIZE OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

A balance must be reached which will give representatives from each constituent authority a voice and a sense of participation in the creation of the new authority and yet not produce a body which is too large and unwieldy to achieve common understanding and work effectively. Circumstances will differ widely from case to case, but the smallest size to fulfil these requirements might be about 8 and the largest about 36. A large committee might break into sub-committees or working parties for special purposes but the work is not likely to be sufficiently extensive or of such a kind as to justify a conventional committee system. In deciding on the size of the joint committee, councillors should therefore not be influenced by the need to man a large number of sub-committees.

### REPRESENTATION ON THE JOINT COMMITTEE

The new legislation provides for counties and county boroughs to establish joint committees for each new county, the membership to include representatives of one or more county districts. Similarly, districts and county boroughs establishing joint committees for new districts must include county representatives. If they fail to establish the committees, the Secretary of State may determine the membership.

Over-nicety about the balance of representation on the joint committee is likely to lead to deadlock. Equal representation of constituent authorities may be considered reasonable where there is no wide variation in size. Where there are substantial differences, it might be reasonable to expect that representation should vary in relation to electoral roll or population although there may still be cases where equal representation gives the best solution. To follow a strict formula may lead to large and unwieldy committees and the larger authorities have in the past usually been agreeable to reducing their representation in order that a reasonably small size can be achieved and the small authorities can feel that they still have a fair part in the exercise.

The representatives on the committee will not be able to come quickly and effectively to decisions on the advice to be offered to central government and to the new council if they are under strict



### *Setting up the new authorities*

mandates from their councils. They may be expected to take thorough soundings locally on matters in which local interest and sentiments are involved, but should then be trusted to act in the best interests of the new authority in reconciling any differences of opinion which may emerge.

If this is not the case, decision-making will be thrust back to a level at which information is relatively lacking and delays will result likely to destroy the possibility of any effective expression of local wishes. Since the decisions before the joint committee are unlikely to be of a kind in which political party values and interests influence voting (excepting recommendations on electoral areas if the joint committee decides to make these), the normal form of party group organisation would not seem appropriate, and was not adopted in the cases we studied. This is not to imply that political parties should not form joint co-ordinating committees to attain a common understanding, to work on the policies to be put forward to the voters and to plan their campaigns for the election of the new council. In so far as the new authorities will be controlled by party groups, it is of importance that the party members in the constituent authorities should work together and identify with the problems of the new authority as early as possible.

Joint committees will operate at both the county and the borough and district levels, and there will be a need for the transfer of functions, staff and properties between these levels. Useful channels of communication would be provided by a measure of cross-membership, and it is suggested that the county joint committees might invite representatives to attend from the district and borough joint committees and that the district joint committees invite representatives from the counties—either as full members or as observers and spokesmen. The government propose that the committees be empowered to co-opt members from the second level. In some cases, however, it may be preferred to arrange for some other form of co-ordinating machinery.

Each constituent authority must obviously be free to choose whatever representatives it wishes, but where there is a substantial minority party and the number of members allows, consideration should be given to the representation of members of the opposition. Such representation would help to maintain the flow of information about the reorganisation and provide the opposition with knowledge of the problems of the new authority which will be helpful at a later stage. It has happened in the past that a swing in voting has changed the dominant party at the time of reorganisation and in such a case the successful party is likely to be handicapped unless it has members with a knowledge of the joint committee's work who can explain its recommendations to their colleagues.

INTERNAL ORGANISATION

The first issue to face a joint committee will be the election of its chairman and his deputy or deputies. Members may wish to leave this matter until the first meeting, or the local leaderships may prefer to make preliminary arrangements at an earlier informal meeting. The chairman may play a similar rôle to that of a chairman of a county or a district council in providing a channel of consultation for officers, or he may adopt a mayoral rôle and not be involved in consultations over the nature of the reports to be presented to the committee. In at least one case in the past a mayoral type of chairmanship has been rotated among the heads of the constituent authorities. The officers may however require a point of reference on important matters and unless this is provided by a chairman and perhaps a vice-chairman who can endeavour to speak on behalf of the committee between meetings, it may be necessary to have a chairman of a working group or general purposes sub-committee who can fulfil this rôle.

As indicated above, the business of a joint committee is dissimilar from that of a council, and it should not be assumed that a conventional committee structure is necessary. The joint committee neither administers services nor lays down policies for the future. Unless the committee is very small it is likely to need a working-group or general purposes sub-committee to report or advise the officers on the preparation of plans for the new authority and to take urgent decisions beyond the power of the officers or the chairman and vice-chairman. In some cases committees may wish to appoint a management sub-committee with a clear responsibility for working together with the secretariat to ensure that everything necessary is done to prepare the way for the new authority.

The Torbay Joint Committee in 1966 appointed three sub-committees on the basis of an analysis of the functions of the joint committee. These were (i) a legal and general purposes committee which was concerned with the statutory order and with accommodation problems, (ii) an organisation sub-committee concerned with advance planning and liaison with the constituent authorities and (iii) an establishment sub-committee to deal with the preparation of the establishment, assimilation of officers and appointments. Experience indicates that the problems of departmental organisation and accommodation are closely inter-twined so that there is a case for grouping these subjects. Advance planning of capital programmes is linked with current works and proposals in the constituent authorities' programmes, so that if an attempt is to be made to rationalise local schemes in the interest of the new authority an advance planning and liaison sub-committee or working-party might be justified.



## *Setting up the new authorities*

The principle here and on other matters, however, must be that of strict economy in time. No body should be set up unless members are satisfied that it will have a worthwhile agenda, that it will be effective and that there is not a less time-consuming means of reaching the same ends.

We consider below the main subjects on which a joint committee may make recommendations. Circumstances and time will influence the joint committee in what it may attempt. Its objectives will influence its decisions on sub-committee structure. It should be borne in mind however that the effects of a joint committee are wider than is reflected in its minutes. It helps members and may help the public to form an image of the new authority and to begin to feel an attachment to and an identification with its interests. It is a means of education in the problems that will face the new authority. It enables people likely to be involved in the new authority to get to know and begin to understand each other's viewpoints.

### THE WORK OF A JOINT COMMITTEE

#### **Advice to central government**

The new local government act will be supplemented by statutory orders. The order procedure lends itself to close co-operation between civil servants and the local authorities concerned so that the provisions can be shaped to the facts and circumstances of each area. Many of the provisions in the orders will be a matter of common form, and consultation about details will centre on facts which can be dealt with at official level by the clerk to the joint committee and the officers of the constituent authorities. But the committee's advice may be sought on a number of key issues likely to be of high local interest.

#### *Local authority boundaries*

The new legislation defines the boundaries of the new counties and the districts within the metropolitan areas. The government has set up an independent and impartial local government boundary commission which is considering proposals put forward as to the grouping of the present units in formulating their own proposed pattern of districts. The Commission's proposals were published in Spring 1972, consultations are to take place (Summer 1972) and proposals finalised and submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment in time for them to be debated in Parliament in the autumn. The pattern of districts will be finalised

### *Organisation before the elections*

by the end of 1972 and imposed by statutory order<sup>1,2</sup>.

New authorities will be defined as far as possible by existing boundaries. In formulating proposals for districts local bodies will therefore be concerned almost entirely with the most suitable combinations of existing areas. The draft guide lines for the Boundary Commission propose that except in sparsely populated areas the aim should be (non-metropolitan) districts with current populations within the range 75,000-100,000, although the limits are not absolute. Only very exceptionally should a district be proposed with a population under 40,000 and the identities of large towns should be maintained. Current populations only are to be taken into account, not projections of future growth, although approved programmes of rapid expansion should be allowed for. In accordance with the government's White Paper (Cmd. 4584) regard is to be paid to the wishes of local inhabitants, the pattern of community life and the effective operation of district services, as well as to parliamentary constituency boundaries.

Joint committees for new counties may wish to make proposals to the Boundary Commission on this subject and perhaps act as agents towards achieving local consensus. In one area a questionnaire on the subject has been widely distributed to local organisations under the aegis of a joint committee. A scheme agreed by a joint committee and existing boroughs and districts would obviously carry heavy weight, but it is clearly a matter of local political judgment whether or not such a consensus might be attempted by the joint committee and if some other form of joint co-operation might not be more successful.

### *Size of the new council*

The government is now proposing a range of 60-100 members for the new county councils, 50-80 for the metropolitan district councils and 30-60 for other district councils<sup>3</sup>. There will be no aldermen. Previous experience indicates that pressure from members of the smaller authorities and local party organisations is likely to be towards the largest representation possible. The most important considerations are clearly on the one hand the size of population and the area a councillor can be expected to serve adequately and on the other hand the efficiency of the council as a decision-making body, since larger

<sup>1</sup> Home Office Consultation Paper, *Electoral Arrangements in England & Wales*, 31 March 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Department of the Environment Circular No. 58/71, HMSO, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Home Office Consultation Paper, *Electoral Arrangements in England & Wales*, 31 March 1971.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

numbers reduce the opportunities for the individual councillor to exercise effective influence and make it more difficult for the council as a whole to reach common understanding. The general aim laid down in a Ministry Circular in 1962 was the smallest bodies compatible with a reasonable degree of representation<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Electoral areas—counties, metropolitan and Welsh districts*

The new legislation lays down broad criteria for electoral divisions. As proposed at present, these are equality of representation (with regard to likely population changes within a five-year period), easily identifiable boundaries, local ties and, in the case of the counties, district ward boundaries. Draft schemes of representation for areas defined in the Bill have been prepared by the Home Office and sent to existing authorities for local publication and comment. The schemes approved for the first elections will be of a provisional nature. The Boundary Commission will subsequently work on schemes which give more precise applications of the provisions in the new Act.

Where difficulties cannot be resolved easily, arrangements may be made for informal local consultations. The draft schemes will be considered by a small independent advisory committee before submission to the Home Secretary. Decisions will be announced before the making of formal orders, which will not be subject to Parliamentary procedure.

Electoral boundaries are of course a matter of great political concern. Local failure to agree on areas has led in many cases in the past to the imposition of a scheme running against the weight of local opinion. Local agreement is obviously desirable where possible. Some joint committees in the past have reached electoral recommendations although divided on other matters. This is impossible however if the seeking of party or parochial advantage dominates the wish to achieve local consensus. Agreement can only be reached by give and take and acceptance of the fact that only rough justice is possible in matters where the claims of convenience have to be reconciled with the claims of equality.

#### *Electoral areas—English county districts (non-metropolitan)*

The Government's intention is that the areas of these authorities

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular No. 35/62, Annexe, paragraph 22, HMSO, 1962.



### *Organisation before the elections*

should be settled in about four months between the determination of the areas by the Home Secretary (say December 1972) and the following April. Outline schemes will be prepared by the Home Office, and county clerks, in conjunction with town clerks where appropriate, will be asked to prepare and publish proposals for electoral boundaries, using suitable groupings of parishes and wards. District joint committees may consider these schemes and seek a unified local point of view.

### *Advice on administrative bodies and areas for special functions*

The Home Secretary may consult locally on areas for justices of the peace and coroners and other officials. These are non-political matters and do not appear to have raised noteworthy problems in amalgamations in the recent past. Police and fire areas have been the subject of much controversy in which joint committees have fought for exclusive control over the local forces. In some cases joint arrangements between authorities will be necessary for the maintenance of these forces. Specific provisions may also be required for joint bodies for planning, sewerage and other functions. Insofar as the Secretary of State has the final decision in these matters, it may be hoped that guidelines will be clear so that local consultation can be restricted to real alternatives.

### *Name and county*

Differences on names have in the past often canalised fears of loss of identity. This can be a question of great difficulty, especially where a new area has no traditional name. Guidelines can again save much futile local discussion. Ministers in the past have made clear that they favour shortness and simplicity and have rarely tolerated twinned or double-barrelled names (such as Huntingdon and Peterborough). These have, nevertheless, had more success than hybrid or concocted names joining together severed syllables from the names of constituent authorities. Where the name of an existing authority is not acceptable, the easiest solution is perhaps to use an existing common geographical feature (as in the case of Teesside) or a 'neutral' local name (as in the case of Warley). The government proposes to "put forward names commanding maximum local support and having regard to the historical or geographical background of the new units". Names of the new counties are included in the Bill itself; district names will be settled after the Bill has passed through Parliament<sup>1</sup>.

Strong feelings have been aroused in the past about county affiliation. Confusion has arisen from failure to understand three distinct concepts:

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Environment Circular No. 58/71, HMSO, 1971.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

- (a) The administrative county as defined under the Local Government Act, 1888, and subsequently amended. The new act will re-define these areas with precision and make the earlier provisions obsolete.
- (b) The legal county for certain non-administrative purposes—commissions of the peace, magistrates' courts, the *custos rotulorum*, lieutenants, sheriffs, juries and clerks of the peace. The arrangements may have to be re-defined to match the new local government boundaries, but in many cases they are not likely to coincide with the administrative county boundaries. This concept does not impinge on the average citizen who is ignorant of lords lieutenant and sheriffs and their functions and whose concern with law courts is not normally related to the 'non-administrative county' within which they lie.
- (c) The county with whose name an area is emotionally identified. This is the sporting county, the regimental county, the ecclesiastical county, the county after which clubs and societies name themselves, and the county of ancient historical associations. It may also be the county of the postal address. This is often called the geographical county but might, perhaps, be much more aptly named the historical county. It does not, of course, have undisputed boundaries and may vary for different purposes. It is now beyond the law and cannot vanish by legal fiat. Thus a Yorkshireman can be sure that his village need never lose its historical and emotional identification with Yorkshire, even if it joins a county with a different name for administrative reasons.

### *Transfer of property and liabilities*

All property owned by local authorities, including land, buildings, and cash balances and all forms of rights, contracts and liabilities, must be transferred to the appropriate new authorities.

Details of property and liabilities requiring transfer can in nearly all cases be handled at officer level as matters of fact<sup>1</sup>. The basic rules are that any physical property held in relation to the exercise of a particular function in a named area immediately before the appointed day<sup>2</sup> (whether situated in that area or not) is to be

<sup>1</sup> This section and subsequent reference to the transfer of property apply to England and possibly Wales, and not to the circumstances which would arise from the appointment of a property commission as proposed by the Royal Commission on Local Government in Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> The 'appointed day' is used to mean the day on which executive responsibility for all local government services is taken over by the new authorities and the old authorities go out of existence, i.e. 1 April 1974 for England and Wales.



### *Organisation before the elections*

transferred to the authority which will in future be responsible for that function in the area, and any property not covered by such provisions is to be transferred to a named residuary legatee. Cases where a building is used for more than one purpose or serves more than one authority may have to be dealt with separately but rules will be elaborated to cover many of these cases. *Ad hoc* arrangements may be necessary in some cases to resolve proprietorship—whether by agreement or by order. Occasionally a dispute may arise over a property to which the local community has an emotional attachment. In default of local agreement, such a matter can only be settled by decision of the Secretary of State or by arbitration under the relevant provisions of the Act.

Properties will have to be divided into county matters, district matters, parish matters and matters falling to other bodies such as health authorities, and the difficulties involved will depend to some extent upon the clarity with which functions can be allocated in the legislation. The government propose, however, that in the case of a property used for a function which becomes exercisable concurrently by county and district councils, it shall remain with the level of authority which previously owned it; that is county properties will go to the counties and district properties to the districts<sup>1</sup>.

Experience shows that failure to determine proprietorship at an early stage can lead to prolonged and difficult wranglings, of great disadvantage to the institutions concerned and a distraction from the main problem of creating an effective administration. For the sake of local services it may be hoped that mutual acceptance of the need for give and take will enable quick and early decisions to be made and save such matters from becoming the subjects of inter-authority competition. Councillors should bear in mind that there is a direct relationship between the time officers can give to achieving an efficient take-over of services and a well-designed organisation, and the extent to which they are involved in preparing cases, making representations and giving evidence on disputes.

Joint committees have in the past been consulted on arrangements in statutory orders for transitional ratings in areas where increases threaten to be exceptionally severe. For example, the Order may limit the annual increase to the increase over the previous year's rate in the largest constituent authority plus 3p. If in one year an area has paid 60p in the pound and the largest area 75p in the pound, and the increase in the following year for the latter area is by 5p to 80p, the first area's rate increase will then be 5p plus 3p

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, Consultation Paper, *General Arrangements for the Transfer of Staff*, 26 August 1971.

to 68p. Rates are thereby equalised in a number of annual steps<sup>1</sup>. (This is a matter which would most simply be settled by national provisions, since there seems little reason for local variation in the size of the steps by which increases can be made; unless the government accept that this is a matter for local discretion—in which case there should be no call for detailed provisions to be laid down by the Secretary of State and the matter may be left for the new authorities to decide as they wish).

In former cases of reorganisation, financial transfers have been made between authorities to compensate in a transitional period for sudden loss of income and so save the losing party from an immediate heavy increase in rate burden<sup>2</sup>. If transitional assistance is provided for in future reorganisations, it is likely to be a matter of inter-authority dispute along with the other financial adjustments. The calculations involved are of a technical nature and in practice must be left to officers and financial consultants. If a basis for agreement is absent the issue can only be resolved by a third party. There would be much advantage in releasing energy for other matters by reducing matters of this kind for inter-authority settlement to an essential minimum.

#### Advice to the new councils

A joint committee may be expected to have *carte blanche* to recommend to the council which supersedes it whatever it may wish. On the principle which we have previously indicated, however, it would be ill-advised to attempt recommendations on matters in which party values are at stake. The political complexion of the new authority will be decided at the first election and the parties will in the meantime be developing their programmes and campaigns. To raise party political issues in a joint committee may not only be futile in terms of influence on the new council, but will also create conflict where cooperation is needed. In particular it will tempt representatives to use joint committee meetings to obtain publicity for their own and party views on issues—a purpose which will reduce the committee's value as a working body and a means of reaching authoritative recommendations.

Study of the time-table for reorganisation will show that the time available to the new council for research on the problems that confront it before it must make effective decisions is likely to be very short. It cannot appoint chief officers before it has worked out its

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the provisions in the *Teesside Order 1967*, Statutory Instrument No. 396, s.66, HMSO, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, s.64.

### *Organisation before the elections*

outline management structure. The chief officers and heads of department when appointed will need time before they can collect information and prepare reports which the new council can consider before making its decisions. Budgeting and other fundamental problems may easily confront the new authority before it has had a chance for the serious spade-work involved in relating policy aspirations to administrative facts. The implications are that as much preparatory work as possible of a kind likely to be of help to the new Council should be undertaken in the joint committee period, and such work can most conveniently be done under the joint committee's auspices.

The work described below has all been undertaken by joint committees in the past, by officers serving them or by consultants on their behalf, and the results have mostly been adopted by the succeeding councils. What can usefully be done in any particular case will depend upon special circumstances.

The joint committee is a valuable body for setting up preparatory work and for working towards consensus where this is judged to be possible and of value. It is stultified if issues are taken up which cause polarisation of conflicting opinion. It is important that a judgment should be made at an early stage on how ambitious its objectives should be, and that appropriate machinery should be set up to achieve the purposes defined.

The joint committee itself and its sub-committees are not themselves suitable bodies for working in great detail on such matters as the new administrative structure. As in most local government matters the procedure will usually be to authorise expert work on a problem and take a decision whether to accept, amend, refer back, reject or submit the ensuing report to the new council without comment. The joint committee may choose to authorise an officer, a group of officers, a group of members assisted by officers or an outside consultant to prepare reports: its object should obviously be to call on the best relevant expertise and experience that is available.

#### *(a) Committee and departmental structures for the new authority*

The White Paper, *Local Government in England*, advises—"It is of first importance that the internal organisation of the new authorities should be based on sound management principles and structures"<sup>1</sup>. Arrangements have been made by the government and local authority associations for a study on management structures for the new authorities. The Royal Commission on Local

<sup>1</sup> Cmnd. 4584, para. 45. See also *Reform of Local Government in Scotland*, Cmnd. 4583, para 75. Both published by HMSO, 1971.



### *Setting up the new authorities*

Government, 1966-69, commented on some of the problems of increased size and came to the conclusion that a new approach is necessary to the problems of internal organisation if local government is to be efficient and responsive to social need. The point we make here is that it should not be assumed that the new organisation can or should be modelled on the old, however well the old form of organisation may have served in the past. Since the new council will need to appoint its team of chief officers as soon as possible and their job definitions will depend upon the form of organisation, it may be of help if the joint committee sets going preparatory work on the subject. Since the issues involved, although of concern to political party representatives, need not be subject to inter-party dispute, many joint committees should be able to commission preliminary studies which would be of value whatever the result of the first elections.

#### *(b) Organisation of departments*

Some joint committees have arranged in the past for the preparation of detailed departmental establishments for the new authority. These have been prepared by chief officers of constituent authorities on the instruction of the joint committee and in one case by a consultant and joint committee liaison officers in collaboration.

Preparatory work is of advantage if it succeeds in enabling new chief officers to set up their new departments early, thereby achieving a more thorough preparation for the take-over of responsibilities and at the same time relieving the uncertainties of staff. Detailed planning will not be possible however until the departmental structure is decided or can be assumed with some certainty. This may normally have to await the election of the new council. Nevertheless, the problems involved are closely connected with the extent to which staff can be re-assured about possible redundancy and with advance planning of accommodation. A preliminary staff survey and advance work by staff on alternative patterns of organisation may be judged valuable and not prejudicial to the right of newly appointed chief officers to make revised proposals to the new council when elected. We discuss these problems in Chapter 5.

#### *(c) Appointment and assimilation of staff to the new authority and conditions of service.*

Although a joint committee has in the past designated chief officers for a new authority, this was done under conditions of urgency and it may not be thought necessary or desirable where new councils are elected a year or five months before the appointed day. Joint committees may however be able to help to ensure that the

### *Organisation before the elections*

appointments are made as early as possible by making preparations for interviews.

The joint committee might authorise a comparative survey of conditions of service in the constituent authorities (see Chapter 6) as well as the survey of staffing suggested above, in order that the information is immediately available to the new council.

There will be strong anxiety amongst staff (both non-manual and manual workers) about their future prospects during this period<sup>1</sup>. The joint committee will not be able to make undertakings to staff on behalf of the new council, but members may wish to meet staff representatives to discuss matters that concern them, explain the scope of the joint committee's work and ensure that as much reassurance is conveyed as can reasonably be given. It may wish to consider advice from the Staff Commission and ensure that this is transmitted to staff.

#### *(d) Accommodation*

Accommodation is likely to be one of the most difficult problems in most future amalgamations. The location of services is of importance to the efficiency of the new authority, and affects its ability to retain staff. Satisfactory integration of services will only be possible if the right accommodation is available. We have much evidence of the demoralising effect on staff when under strain in the early months of a new authority of squalid, over-crowded and make-shift accommodation and inadequate communications.

The joint committee can play an important part in solving these problems by commissioning a survey of existing accommodation and a report on ways in which the new authority might be accommodated. The problems of communication posed by the proposals can be studied and the Post Office given notice of likely requirements. These needs will be considered more fully in Chapter 9. Councillors will be concerned about the accommodation for the new Council. Arrangements will have to be made in advance for its first meeting. Although this and the location of committee rooms and mayoral suites have been subjects of hot controversy in some joint committees in the past, it would not seem difficult to reach agreement to arrange the first meeting in the most suitable accommodation available in a reasonably central position, and leave the long-term decisions to the new Council.

One subject which has resulted in much wasted discussion in the past is the location and design of new civic centres. In many cases a new administrative centre is likely to be necessary in the long run, but it seems likely that only in cases of extreme urgency will

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 8, pp. 102-105.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

it be possible to take effective action in the interim period to erect permanent buildings in time to relieve accommodation problems in the early days of a new authority. When such a centre is possible it will be a major design project which will have to be approved by the new Council.

Temporary accommodation may be needed for the joint committee's secretariat and for the new chief officers and their staffs during the first year of the new Council.

#### *(e) General*

There will be other matters on which the joint committee will wish to authorise action. Some will emerge from the study of the Appendix. Many will be of a fact finding nature. A study of the financial resources and commitments of the new authority should be of value, as will a survey of the plant and equipment of the new authority to indicate its capacity and supplementary needs. There will be many special matters connected with individual services. In most of these things the committee's function will be to authorise studies by experts. The work of the officers will be discussed in Chapter 3.

#### **Advice to constituent authorities and other bodies**

The joint committee is the trustee for the new authority before the new council is elected. It may find that its advice on long-term issues such as the location of an airport is sought by other bodies. In some cases constituent authorities may wish to consult on matters which they feel go beyond the time span with which they are concerned. It will be a matter of discretion on what matters of this kind the joint committee feels it can usefully enter into discussions or give advice.

#### *(a) Capital programmes and financial balances*

The joint committee clearly has to work with its constituent authorities in the interest of the future of its area as a whole. As reorganisation approaches, the planning horizons of the constituent authorities will become progressively shorter and they will lose long-term perspective. The guardianship of long-term interests will fall to the joint committee.

If the joint committee takes this responsibility seriously, it may seek to bring influence to bear on constituent authorities not to take actions which may be against the future general interest of the area as a whole. Constituent authorities will undoubtedly be tempted to commit the new authority to new schemes. They may be tempted to enter into liabilities involving little immediate expense but ultimately heavy capital and recurrent costs which will fall



### *Organisation before the elections*

upon the new authority. The new authority may find itself so heavily committed in this way in its early years that the integrated planning and rationalisation of services for the area as a whole, purposes for which it was set up, would be seriously delayed.

In the past central government has taken few measures to stop runaway local developments of this kind. The control on loan sanctions has not been used to freeze local development. Constituent authorities have been asked to refer schemes to joint committees and new councils to ensure that they have no objection, but this has often been ineffective, partly because of the unwillingness of a joint committee to offend its constituent councils or of a new council to disagree with the old councils before it had time to organise and form its own policies.

The provisions of the Department of the Environment Circular 2/70 of 12 November 1970 (Welsh Office Circular 116/70) have relaxed loan sanction control so that a large range of schemes in the so-called 'non-key sectors' may be undertaken freely within an overall annual total of expenditure. There is no control, moreover, on starts on some types of projects or to stop an acceleration in expenditure by running down local balances.

If the joint committee is to be effective in this field it will need to ask for the confidence and free co-operation of the constituent authorities at the earliest possible stage. It will have to ask its secretariat to obtain information about current schemes and future programmes, review the implications for the area as a whole and give firm advice on what should proceed and what should be re-considered or postponed. New proposals should be referred to the joint committee at a very early stage: it is important to avoid making heavy investments of staff time on projects which are destined to frustration. The situation should be avoided of which there is evidence in the past, where a large number of ideas lying dormant for many years are suddenly brought forward together, and in consequence the technical officers concerned are heavily over-burdened with the preparation of paper schemes and unable to give the co-operation needed for work on the new authority.

The joint committee might wish to suggest to constituent authorities a level of expenditure which would justify the reference of a proposal for consultation in the light of the requirements of the new authority. Constituent authorities might identify in respect of functions to be taken over by different new authorities:

- (i) Committed schemes;
- (ii) Schemes of a localised nature unaffected by reorganisation proposals;
- (iii) Long-term schemes which should be subject to review by the new authority.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

The joint committee might advise on which schemes should proceed, be modified or be deferred with a determination of a priority rating to be considered later by the new council. It will be important not to hold up necessary land acquisitions and it may be agreed that formal consultation is necessary only in the case of a very large acquisition of a long-term nature.

A joint committee has in the past been successful in obtaining the agreement of constituent authorities to aim at handing over not less than a certain amount per capita in their recurrent financial balances. It seems desirable to avoid both 'spending sprees' and the spending out of balances or running down of services in order to peg rates below what would normally be expected in the last two years of an authority's life.

#### *(b) Purchase of equipment*

There have been cases in the past where constituent authorities have bought equipment in the year or two before reorganisation which was unsuitable for use in the new authority. It seems desirable, if there is any danger that this might happen, that the joint committee should advise constituent authorities to consult each other through their officers before placing large orders to ensure that new equipment will be compatible with that of the other authorities concerned.

#### *(c) Regrading of staff*

A further problem arises over the re-grading of staff. It has commonly happened that authorities in their last days have sought to protect or improve the prospects of their staffs by up-grading them or giving additional increments. The London Staff Commission informed the National Joint Council for Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical Services that in its opinion "any upgrading solely or mainly as a preliminary step to transfer under the reorganisation might seriously impair the fair assimilation of staff". It is not easy to achieve justice in this matter. There is no doubt that gradings for posts of similar responsibilities vary between authorities and between departments. Members of an authority which has in the past held its gradings low may feel that they have an obligation to their officers to raise them to levels comparable with those in other authorities and thereby not disadvantage them in their careers in the new authority. Ideally staff would be re-graded only after job evaluations. Regradings would then be given only where it was clear that they did not give officers salaries above the norm for similar work in the other constituent authorities. The job evaluation skills may not often be available to make such a procedure feasible.

### *Organisation before the elections*

The alternative would seem to be to attempt to obtain agreement by constituent authorities to exercise restraint over re-gradings and to consult the other constituent authorities before making re-gradings. Some elected members and officers have suggested a 'freezing' of gradings in the year or two before reorganisation. This might be reasonable if there were known to be no serious discrepancies in levels of pay. In some cases in the past it has been claimed that re-gradings have been granted because of additional work precipitated by the reorganisation. There seems no doubt that whatever extra reward may be deemed necessary for extra work should be paid by means of *ex gratia* payments and not by permanent re-gradings.

#### *(d) Avoidance of new recruitment*

Some joint committees in the past have asked their constituent authorities not to fill vacancies or create new posts in the period before the appointed day. Officers have been seconded from one authority to another to fill urgent vacancies. Officers due for retirement have had their service extended and acting appointments have been made to avoid the necessity for new appointments. Staff associations may press these policies to prevent possible redundancies. The policy has its dangers. It could lead to the new authority being short of staff in its critical first months of responsibility.

The position requires clarification as early as possible so that recruitment can proceed which does not endanger the re-employment of existing staff or lead to an inflation of the new authority's establishment. The joint committee may be able to reach tentative conclusions after a preliminary survey of staff. This survey should be made by the officers at the earliest opportunity and should cover the implications of the need to transfer staff between counties and districts and ad hoc bodies such as the health authorities. It will of necessity contain many uncertainties at this stage which must be removed step by step by periodical up-dating. It will also require difficult judgments on such matters as the size of the central administrative components in the light of the change in scale, the demands for servicing made by whatever committee system is adopted, etc. The basis of the judgments should be on record so that they may easily be amended as assumptions change and more facts are known.

#### *(e) Proposals by constituent authorities*

In some cases in the past constituent authorities have pressed ideas on joint committees for acceptance, or asked for advice on proposed new developments. Such action may have value as a



### *Setting up the new authorities*

means of making preliminary soundings so that local ideas can be looked at the light of the interest of the area as a whole, but it is important that it should not be seen as a means to tie the hands of the new authority in advance. The joint committee, as we have seen, has no power to do this, and on many matters it would be ill-advised to anticipate decisions before the necessary staff work can be carried out by officers in the new authority.

#### COMMUNICATION WITH CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES AND THE PUBLIC

Joint committees, when formally constituted with delegated responsibility, have been under an obligation to admit the press under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960. By this Act they are required to open their meetings to the public, to give at least three days' public notice of meetings, to supply copies of agendas and reports to newspapers on request and to provide reasonable facilities for reporters. The public may be excluded by a reasoned resolution. Sub-committees of a joint committee are not of course subject to these provisions.

In many cases constituent authorities have pressed for copies of joint committee minutes to be made available for their members. Constituent authorities will naturally be interested in the decisions of the joint committee and any sub-committees it may set up which affect their area, and thought needs to be given to the best way to keep them informed.

In some cases it may be thought preferable to issue special reports rather than to circulate minutes. These might be designed also for the information of the press and public. The joint committee will be starting to build the 'image' of the new authority in the public mind and good publicity may enable the public to begin to identify with the new area.

#### POLITICAL ORGANISATION AND THE JOINT COMMITTEE

We have seen that most of the business of the joint committees will not be of a kind in which the differences in party values are important. The need for special party group organisation for the joint committee does not arise. On the other hand the parties face the need to study their organisation, tactics and programmes for the new council election. Party co-ordinating committees may be needed at an early stage to work out the implications for the party of the new local authority and electoral boundaries, perhaps to set up study groups to recommend policy statements to be included in the election manifesto and in press publicity and to make the arrangements for the selection of candidates. Work within the party organisation on matters outside the committee's scope may help to foster identity with the new authority.

### *Organisation before the elections*

The main parties are likely to have representatives on the joint committee and so will be able to keep members informed on progress and take party soundings on any matter where this may be helpful.

#### POLITICS, PAROCHIALISM AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A JOINT COMMITTEE

Experience shows that the most damaging influence on the performance of a joint committee is parochialism or the pursuit of one constituent authority's interests at the expense of the whole. There is no simple antidote for parochialism. It can only be overcome slowly by forming a concept of the new authority as a whole and discussing problems in the light of this concept. This will be pre-eminently the responsibility of the local political leadership, but in order to define the problems they will be dependent upon information and reports from the joint committee's secretariat. A key question, therefore, which we shall consider in the next chapter, is the nature and quality of the staff work the joint committee has at its disposal.

#### THE RÔLE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Central government's rôle is to lay down the conditions of reorganisation, to give general advice and to determine matters relating to specific areas only where this is necessary for constitutional reasons or where local disputes cannot otherwise be resolved. It has not the resources to become involved in local matters except where absolutely necessary. The number of members of the government and civil servants directly concerned with reorganisation is very small; they are vastly outnumbered by the new authorities. Similarly the Staff Commission is not a large organisation. Their knowledge of specific local circumstances is inevitably limited and for these reasons and in accordance with the declared policy for the encouragement of local autonomy they must expect local authorities to solve their own problems locally wherever possible without central intervention.

Although local consultations will not be concerned with the principles of reorganisation, we have already listed a number of matters on which local authorities may be required to give advice to the Home Office and the Department of the Environment for incorporation in the legal provisions for reorganisation. If this is agreed advice it is normally accepted: if local authorities speak with differing and conflicting voices on local issues the matter has to be determined centrally. The extent to which local authorities can achieve a united voice therefore will in some measure determine their power to exercise autonomy.

### 3 The Officer Organisation

THE joint committee will have a responsibility to ensure that preparations have been made to enable the new council and its chief officers, on their appointment, to set up the new administration rapidly and without delay in the few months available. This implies extensive work at staff level, both in preparation of reports for the joint committee itself and in preparation of reports of a more technical nature to be channelled direct to the new chief officers.

Before examining the needs of a joint committee and the ways in which it can fulfil this responsibility we shall consider briefly the scope of the management tasks which may profitably be undertaken at officer level before the appointment of the new chief officers. These are listed by subject and in more detail in the Appendix. The first need is for a programme of action. In our first chapter we have stressed the need for systematic advance programming to provide for a reasonable allocation of time to all essential activities, and suggested that this might be based upon network analysis to enforce a study of the nature of the activities involved, the uncertainties in the situation and choices of action. Studies will be needed on the main tasks of the interim period such as electoral preparations and the provision of accommodation. These matters will be discussed later and are listed in the Appendix.

Four general and interconnected tasks may be distinguished which are basic to the efficiency of all the services of the new authority. The first is the collection of the information required to plan the new departments and their services. The second is planning the management systems for the new authority. The third is the rationalisation of existing services wherever this will help to ease the transfer of functions. The last is the establishment of sound human relationships upon which the smoothness and motivation of the new authority will largely depend. It is important that responsibilities for specific work should be clearly allocated,



## *The officer organisation*

whether to individual officers or groups of officers.

### COLLECTION OF INFORMATION

The information needs of the joint committee will require definition and other needs will arise in connection with the problems of integration at administrative level. Basic data will be required upon:

- (a) Local services provided, for example case-loads, level and extent of maintenance work, school places, frequency of refuse collection.
- (b) Local resources: staff, buildings and equipment, finance, etc.
- (c) Local procedures such as selection of pupils for schools, grant assessment, method of housing allocation, rent collection, contracting and supplies.
- (d) Local plans: environmental, capital development, school re-organisation, etc.

The lists will be extensive and vary according to the type of authority concerned. They will fall into two classes. In the first class there will be information in connection with the central management processes of the local authority. Data on resources, commitments, capital programmes, and procedures of inter-departmental importance need to be aggregated centrally. In some cases data and processes maintained on a departmental basis in constituent authorities may be seen as better treated as central matters in planning for the new authority. Chief officers with the help of staff with inter-departmental experience should be able to define information for collection centrally and to set up a small group or groups of staff to manage this operation.

We hesitate to suggest a central data bank as a general possibility. Too often data are collected for the sake of comprehensiveness which prove to have very limited utility. Uncritical collection or copying of records which in practice have little subsequent use must be avoided. What is collected must be directly related to urgent problems in the interim period if the work is to prove manageable, and close regard must be had to the impact of the demands on existing departments to ensure that the workload imposed is not unreasonable.

The second class will be of information related to the needs of individual services, where specification can be left to the chief officers concerned. Since the same functions are often to be found in different types of department, it will not be enough to leave such work to groups of treasurers, or chief education officers or housing managers. Overlap must be identified and safeguards made against oversights.

We found in our investigation that many officers stressed the

### *Setting up the new authorities*

difficulties that arose from information not being available in sufficient detail. Information for operational use should obviously be complete enough to use without further research, but the point seems to have been often overlooked in the past. In some cases information on contracts was highly deficient and new departments only became aware of all their commitments many months after the appointed day. In some small authorities memories have to some extent served in place of systematic records. An increase in scale and discontinuities of staff make such methods impossible. The larger authority is dependent upon systematic written records for smoothness of functioning. Officers in small authorities should anticipate this need and as soon as possible introduce systematic listing of data on contracts, etc. in a form easy to hand over to the new authorities.

#### INFORMATION REQUIRED BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Matters on which the Home Office and Department of the Environment will require advice are listed in the Appendix. The hiving off of health functions will generate other demands. It will be seen that they involve comprehensive studies of local provisions involving all local departments. Here we remark upon problems involved in the provisions for transfer of properties.

Allocation of property between authorities has to be made, to some extent, by Ministerial Orders before the new authorities are set up. It is therefore necessary to determine ownership during the joint committee period. In any event, allocation of properties has direct implications for staffing and accommodation planning. It is therefore a matter to be dealt with at an early stage.

A classification of properties will be necessary according to their functions and their proposed destination.<sup>1</sup> In the vast majority of cases these will be clear and raise no doubts about which new authority should take them over. The listing should bring to light the doubtful cases upon which discussion is required.

This and some other information will require aggregation at a central point, whether or not it is required for submission to the Department of the Environment. It will overlap needs for other purposes, e.g. departmental terriers of properties, and it should be possible to study these related needs and ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication over the collection of the information.

#### STUDY OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

A comparative study of systems in use in constituent authorities should form the basis of studies on the choice of alternatives. By systems we mean here sets of procedures for different purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> See also pages 18-19.

### *The officer organisation*

A local authority will have hundreds of systems of this kind, established over a long period and developed as self-maintaining routines. They are well tried and they give stability and reliability to the administration. On amalgamation of authorities it will be found that there are big differences in systems in the various constituent authorities. A single system must be chosen to replace the variety.

The systems of the different constituent authorities may be seen as alternatives. A study may be made to select the best or ascertain the best elements of each scheme. It is desirable however that the search for alternatives should not stop there, and that new ideas are examined which promise an improvement on all the local systems.

The work involved is potentially enormous and it would be unrealistic to attempt to make exhaustive studies of all procedures in use. However, the earlier a start is made on this work the more can be achieved and the more people can be involved. It is interesting, creative work and it was clear that some section heads we interviewed, and some other officers, who had normally been tied to routine jobs, had found the challenge stimulating and rewarding. This is one chance to bring out latent abilities which may have lain dormant.

Although in many instances immediate integration of systems will be necessary on reorganisation, in others it will be possible to run existing local systems unchanged for a while and postpone their replacement by an all-authority system. There are good reasons for taking the latter course when it is convenient, in order to give more attention to inevitable innovations and to maintaining continuity, and for other reasons which we shall discuss in later chapters. Some officers, however, emphasised the difficulties of integration after the new administration has begun to settle down and work-groups have obtained separate identities and the long-term advantages of making important changes while the organisation is fluid.

#### OBSTACLES TO CO-OPERATION

We found that in some previous cases of reorganisation, work at officer level had been hindered for a number of reasons. In a few cases hostile and suspicious relations between authorities have led councillors to discourage officers from co-operating. We were told that in other cases officers strongly opposed to reorganisation and resenting the change had made working together difficult. Fear of the largest authority and resentment of its leadership was reported. Perhaps anticipation of such resentment on the part of chief officers in large authorities was an even greater problem since



### *Setting up the new authorities*

it deterred them from taking action. It seems important to recognise these psychological difficulties if they exist, and make conscious efforts to overcome them.

Authorities failed to supply information requested from them in some instances because of shortage of staff and an excessive load of other work. In some cases appointment of temporary staff could have helped. As we suggest later in connection with problems of staff workload, there is a strong case for the streamlining of other work in the interim period and this may enable more effort to be put into preparations for amalgamation.

The need is stressed for councillors to appreciate the size of the tasks involved and to adopt a helpful attitude over the demands it makes on officers.

#### INTERIM CHANGES

The possibility of making early changes in current systems to ease the transition deserves early examination. Some equipment is likely to become unserviceable and need replacement during the transitional period and it is important that replacements should be compatible with equipment elsewhere. In some matters it may be possible to agree on early standardisation so that compatible equipment can be purchased by the constituent authorities. In some cases early ordering may be necessary in preparation for the appointed day. Some areas where preparatory action may be of special importance are the codification of expenditure for estimates and other purposes, pay arrangements, organisation of an effective computer service from what may be a miscellany of incompatible equipment, pupil allocation to secondary schools and discretionary awards schemes. Interim changes should of course be made in the light of what is aimed at in the 'permanent' management systems. This emphasises the need to formulate ideas about management objectives at an early stage.

#### HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

In so far as staff can be involved in planning new systems, they will start to operate them with understanding and a stake in their success. This will help towards the last of the four general management tasks we have distinguished—the establishment of sound human relationships in the new authority.

Knowledge spreads swiftly that new plans are being made which are likely to affect the future of staff and quickly gives rise to rumour. Comparatively few members of staff are likely to hold positions in which they are well-informed about the details of reorganisation plans. It will be helpful if unnecessary secrecy is avoided and chief officers in the constituent authorities accept a

responsibility to see that staff are kept well informed. The issue of bulletins to staff might be a responsibility conferred on the joint committee's secretariat. The broader aspects of staff morale will be discussed in a later chapter.

#### FORMS OF STAFF ORGANISATION

##### **The joint committee's first officer**

A first need of a joint committee will be for a clerk, chief executive or co-ordinating officer. This officer will carry some or all of the following responsibilities:

- (a) to prepare agenda and minutes for the committee,
- (b) to act as correspondent with central government departments, the constituent authorities and the public,
- (c) to ensure thorough preparation of advice to central government on provisions in statutory orders,
- (d) to ensure that the joint committee is kept well informed and that all matters with which it should be concerned are brought to its attention,
- (e) to give advice on the committee's procedures and programmes,
- (f) to see that reports are prepared embodying expertise relevant to the decisions that come before the committee,
- (g) to arrange for the preparation of information and reports which will enable the new council and its staff to tackle reorganisation problems without delay.

He will, of course, be dependent upon staff support and for this purpose it will be necessary to draw upon the resources of officers in the constituent authorities. In one previous amalgamation the clerk to the joint committee was designated Co-ordinating Officer in order to indicate the importance of his rôle in relation to work done by other officers. If he is seconded to the work from a post in one of the constituent authorities a decision will have to be taken whether or not this is to be on a part-time or a full-time basis. The most usual appointment in the past has been that of the clerk of the largest of the constituent authorities. There are precedents however for the appointment of other officers. It has been argued that an officer due to retire on amalgamation would be the most suitable choice since he would be above competition for posts in the new authority and this would ease his relationships with councillors and other officers. A contrary view is that the officer concerned should be younger and have a stake in the new authority. It seems clear that the officer appointed should be a person able to achieve a high level of co-operation amongst chief officers in the constituent authorities in the preparation of work for the joint committee and the new council and to hold staff to a demanding time-table.

### **Staff support**

Many alternative forms of staff support are possible. The joint committee may wish to be serviced by a team of officers which includes specialist knowledge of the main services and familiarity with the complete area of the new authority. The clerk or co-ordinating officer to the joint committee will obviously require such a team if the work we suggest as desirable at the joint committee stage is to be carried out. Such a team or staff group should be small and able to call freely upon the joint staff resources in the constituent authorities.

A form of organisation adopted in some cases has been to place a joint responsibility upon the clerks of the constituent authorities. These may have a limited amount of time to give to the work, but could arrange for special studies to be made by appropriate project groups reporting through them to the committee. In some cases 'service groups' of heads of department have been formed, e.g. the treasurers have met together as one working party, the engineers and surveyors as another, etc. We have suggested above that groups of this kind are an appropriate means for dealing with specialised departmental matters, as opposed to those of general inter-departmental concern. If the organisation becomes too specialised along departmental lines there may be a failure to give sufficient study and bring enough points of view to bear on the general aspects of management, such as the impact of decisions on staff. Careful co-ordination is essential and this will involve channelling reports through a central agency, which might most conveniently be the joint committee secretariat.

Central government's need for information for the preparation of statutory orders will require comprehensive studies of local provisions, involving clerks, treasurers and other heads of departments in all the constituent authorities. Requests for information may normally be expected to flow from the clerk to the joint committee, to the clerks to constituent authorities and from the clerks to other heads of departments. On some matters—particularly financial judgments—groups of professional chief officers may meet together to form collective opinions.

Whatever the organisation at chief officer level, matters involving study of detail and a variety of types of contribution may be most efficiently worked on by ad hoc inter-authority project groups which can, where appropriate, represent a range of disciplines, departments and levels of staff. Where functions are being transferred or divided between county and district level they might bring officers together from the two levels. They might also include or call upon advice from experts outside the constituent authorities who have a useful contribution to make. One joint



### *The officer organisation*

committee has decided to appoint project groups of this kind to prepare a programme for amalgamation, to make recommendations on electoral areas and registration, to prepare plans for new accommodation and to make suggestions for the management structure of the new authority.

It may be thought unnecessary to give groups terms of reference of too precise a nature since their function is partly exploratory or for defining the nature of the local problems, and strict terms of reference might be inhibiting in this respect. To some extent they might reasonably be expected to define their own terms of reference, provided there is an adequate system of communication.

To summarise, four types of staff group may be distinguished:

- (a) A central co-ordinative group consisting of the clerks of the constituent authorities or other chief officers responsible for defining general management problems and ensuring general co-ordination in staff work. The clerk to the joint committee would be a member of or in intimate contact with this group.
- (b) Chief officer groups for specific services with a responsibility for defining problems and setting up studies in specialised areas.
- (c) Inter-departmental project groups appointed to study and report through the co-ordinative machinery on specific problems. (These groups could be linked by common membership.)
- (d) Project groups within specific services set up by and reporting through the relevant chief officers' group.

Work in groups is time-consuming and should not be allowed to get out of hand. Much of the work required can be prepared by individuals and co-ordinated by an executive. For example, information about properties might be prepared by individual heads of department according to a pattern worked out in the secretariat and approved jointly by the clerks. It might then be submitted to clerks of constituent authorities for checking with legal and financial records and finally assembled by the clerk to the joint committee or another officer on whom the responsibility might be conferred. The central record can then be maintained for the new authority, points of doubt raised with officers and other authorities as necessary and such information as is required by the central departments submitted to Whitehall.

Where a large county is being divided, it would be desirable for the form in which information is required to be standardised for all of its parts. Perhaps a meeting of clerks at regional level could arrange for preparation of the necessary standard forms.

### **Special appointments**

In some cases there may be a need for special full-time appointments in connection with preparation for the new authority. For example it may be decided that the integration of computer systems in use in the constituent authorities requires an officer or group of officers to work full-time on this problem. The integration of bonus incentive schemes is another example of a matter which may be deemed urgent and justify the appointment of work study officers. Officers could be seconded from constituent authorities: in some cases it may be necessary to recruit from outside the constituent authorities. For administrative purposes newly recruited officers could be placed on the payroll of one of the constituent authorities. There is a danger that where special appointments of this kind are made some members of the staff of the constituent authorities will tend to be reluctant to acknowledge a joint responsibility with the new officer for the outcome of the work. Previous experience indicates that there is a need to stress the general responsibility to co-operate and share in the work of such specialists.

### **USE OF CONSULTANTS**

One joint committee formed for an amalgamation in the past appointed a consultant to advise on organisation, assimilation of staff and accommodation. Commissioning work of this kind at an early stage in the interim period would enable complex questions of this kind to be given the thorough study they deserve. It is clearly the case that if a sophisticated approach to the allocation of accommodation is to be adopted, such as that being pioneered by the Local Government Operational Research Unit,<sup>1</sup> the studies will have to be set up before the new council and its officers are appointed. Appointments of consultants on financial matters and in order to 'put in' bonus incentive schemes have also been made in the past at an early stage in the reorganisation process. The consultant has a special advantage in that he is in a position of neutrality in relation to the interests of members of the various authorities. If employed it is essential that his contacts with those responsible for policy formulation in the matters with which he is concerned should be intimate and free. He must be given every opportunity to understand the details of the local situation, and, of course, officers must have full opportunities to comment on his reports.

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<sup>1</sup> Local Government Operational Research Unit, *The Location of Offices and Civic Buildings*, Report on a Feasibility Study. Report No. C45, February 1970.

### *The officer organisation*

Problems may arise if consultants are employed early on work on the management structure of the new authority, in that they will not be working to a clear client and their reports may be embarrassing if they prove at variance with the philosophy of the new authority after its election. On the other hand, if the consultants are appointed after the election of the new authority the pressure of work on the officers may be such as to make it impossible to give the consultants the time and information they will require to gain sufficient mastery of the local requirements. Employment of consultants to facilitate transitional arrangements may not meet the same difficulties.

#### THE JOINT COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT

The clerk to the joint committee may be provided with accommodation either within one of the existing authorities, or separately in order to stress his neutrality. The former arrangement is simpler, more economical and would keep him and his unit in close touch with other officers. The latter arrangement would stress that the new authority is distinct from the existing authorities and not one authority taking over the others.

The staff resources required will vary greatly according to the area, the objectives set by the joint committee and the time-scale. How far full-time staff are required for the secretariat will have to be determined in each case. Such staff may normally be recruited from constituent authorities on secondment.

The seniority of the staff will depend upon how the local joint committee envisages the functions of the secretariat. They may feel that there is a need for a senior officer to be designated liaison officer for each group of services and to work closely with the appropriate chief officers in the constituent authorities in setting up the necessary studies. Such an officer might be a member of the central co-ordinative group described above.

It would assist the smoothness of the transition if the joint committee secretariat could stay in existence after the election of the new council and until the new clerk and chief executive officer is appointed. Any full-time officers in the secretariat would presumably be seconded to this work from appointments in constituent authorities and could either return to their primary employers or continue on secondment to serve the new authority.



## 4 The New Councils

The range of functions of the new councils until the appointed day when they take over responsibilities from the former authorities will be different from that to which councillors have been accustomed. The new councils will at first resemble the joint committees in having no services to run: their concern will be with the future. The main powers given to new authorities before they assume responsibility for services cover arrangements connected with the constitution of the council, appointment of officers, borrowing to cover expenditure before the appointed day, preparation of estimates and the approval of rates and precepts. Their main tasks must however be expressed in much broader terms. They include planning, setting up a new organisation, making initial policies and all the arrangements necessary to ensure that the services of the constituent authorities are taken over smoothly on the appointed day. They will be laying the foundations of the new authority and determining its potentiality.

We make no apology for returning to the theme of the shortage of time. It may appear on the calendar that the new councils will have twelve, eleven or nine months, according to their status, before taking over services. Experience has shown in the past that the useful time available tends to prove less than is apparent at first sight. The councillors must form themselves into an effective organisation and a staff has to be appointed before most tasks can be started upon: there is a vast amount of information to assimilate and contingencies arise which distract from the main tasks. The key problem is how best to make use of the all too short period available.

### THE FIRST MEETING

The new legislation provides for the Secretary of State to designate a local authority to provide the returning officer for the first election. The appropriate joint committee will decide which local authority or authorities will provide the clerk to receive declara-

### *The new councils*

tions of acceptance of office from new councillors, summon the new council and appoint their first place of meeting, and, for the first meeting, the clerk or deputy clerk to act as temporary officer, the standing orders to be temporarily adopted and the chairman and vice-chairman until the new chairman has been elected. (Schedule 3 of the Bill as amended by the Commons Committee.) The first item at the first meeting will be the election of the chairman, followed by the election or appointment of the vice-chairman. Legal provision will have been made by the government for the expenditure of the new authority to be apportioned amongst the constituent authorities. The council will have to authorise necessary expenditure by officers.

An important task is the appointment of one or more committees to make plans for the management of business in the future and take urgent decisions. The policy on the admission of the press to committees may also be decided at this stage.

It will be necessary to appoint an acting clerk or chief executive to succeed the designated temporary official, and possibly other acting officers. If the preparatory work has been done informally, it may even be possible to decide on the designation and salary of the permanent chief executive officer, so that the procedure, according to whatever advice has been given by the Staff Commission, can be set in motion without delay.

Many new district councils may wish to act quickly to arrange to petition for borough status and historic privileges such as styles and titles conferred by royalty. The ability to appoint a mayor and deputy mayor to succeed the mayors and deputy mayors of constituent authorities on the appointed day will depend on such a petition being made and granted by the Crown before that date. The draft legislation requires an authority to convene a special council meeting to vote upon such a petition.

Other urgent matters which have been dealt with in the past at first meetings include:

- (a) the allowances of the chairman;
- (b) the appointment of bankers;
- (c) adoption of a temporary common seal;
- (d) printing of minutes;
- (e) authorisation of officers to appoint junior staff.

Further details are given in the Appendix.

It is important that it should be made clear to members at this stage what work has been done on reorganisation and what remains to be done. A report from the joint committee may state what has been achieved and define some of the problems to be

### *Setting up the new authorities*

resolved by the new council. The tasks and programme which the joint committee will have set itself will have depended upon how it analysed the activities of the full period from its beginnings until the 'operative date' for the new authority. It will be helpful if the report can include details of a recommended programme for the new council until the appointed day, including an analysis of what has to be done and suggested deadlines for main decisions.

It is apparent that careful preparation will be required if the first meeting is to proceed smoothly and effectively. The acting clerk will have to prepare the agenda in close consultation with the political leadership. Amongst other things, decisions will have to be taken on the interim committee organisation, and the appointment of an acting clerk to succeed the temporary official.

One possibility is that a preliminary meeting of the new councillors is held immediately after the elections to make preparatory decisions and to enable the councillors to familiarise themselves with the immediate problems before the first formal meeting. Such a meeting as this however would also need careful preparation and this, like the main preparations for the first council meeting itself, is a task which is likely to fall to the political leadership.

In authorities with party systems any meeting of all the councillors will have to be preceded by group meetings to elect group officers and prepare the business.

On legal and procedural matters and items which arise from joint committee decisions the leadership will have to act in consultation with officers, and in particular with the clerk to the former joint committee. On allocation of office, membership of committees and other matters of a strictly political nature they will have to formulate decisions, often in the light of conflicting practices in constituent authorities, without delay.

#### INTERIM COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

There are strong reasons for appointing a special committee with a central responsibility in setting up the new authority. It is important that there should be a group of members who can meet together regularly, familiarise themselves with the overall tasks, formulate a strategy and a programme and endeavour to ensure that the aims agreed by the council are achieved within the time available.

The following matters in particular will have to be resolved and might be given at least initial consideration and advised on by such a committee:



### *The new councils*

- (a) programme and aims for the interim period;
- (b) committee organisation for the interim period and the first operative year;
- (c) selection of members for committees;
- (d) composition of the team of chief officers, their job definitions and their terms of employment;
- (e) departmental organisation;
- (f) guidelines for appointments of staff;
- (g) accommodation for the new administration;
- (h) means for staff consultation;
- (i) means for keeping staff as a whole well informed on matters which affect their futures;
- (j) public relations;
- (k) relations with constituent authorities.

The inter-related nature of these decisions may be thought a reason for beginning with an integrated approach and placing all or most of them under the care of a single committee (whether an executive, management, policy, general purposes, planning, finance and establishment committee or one by any other name).

The scope of the work before such a committee would be so wide that it might be thought necessary to have sub-committees or other special committees to make studies or take decisions within its field of general responsibility, as the need arises.

One immediate task is to appoint a team of chief officers who are not only experts in their own fields but also able to work effectively together in giving integrated advice to the new authority. It may be thought that such an object can best be achieved by giving such a 'central committee' the responsibility for the necessary appointments. This has been done successfully in cases in the past. They would of course be responsible for drawing on well-informed advice in fields relevant to a particular appointment and might call on outside assessors or consultants. The other main alternative for chief officer appointments is to set up quickly 'service' committees to make these key appointments. If these are seen as permanent standing committees the issue might be thought pre-judged of whether departmental heads should be primarily responsible each to a service committee (with the danger of the centrifugal force of committee—chief officer alliances, as deprecated by the Maud Management Committee<sup>1</sup>).

There will be few matters on which interim committees can act safely without advice from the officers who will ultimately have to make the management system work. Ideas about committee and

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<sup>1</sup> *Management of Local Government*, Vol. 1., Report of the Committee, pp. 26, 28, 38, 57, HMSO, 1967.

staff organisation, for example, should be developed to serve the management processes envisaged for the new authority as well as to give elected members effective overall control over an administration which in most cases will be on a different scale and have a different range from that of which councillors will have had previous experience. This will require dialogue and close co-operation. This is one reason why the appointment of chief and other key officers is a matter of outstanding priority.

Committees with more specialised concerns will tend to become active when the new heads of department have been appointed and have had time to prepare their first reports. There is no reason why these should meet according to a regular cycle from the first council meeting: the criterion should be the need and the degree to which work can be satisfactorily prepared for discussion in the light of the resources available. If heads of department are able to make key appointments within their departments without delay there will be greater opportunities for studying policy opportunities within this period and relating these to the staff establishment and the use of resources.

#### GENERAL

Expectations about what can be achieved before the appointed day should not be set at unrealistic levels. We shall deal with the central activities of organisation planning, appointments, accommodation and budgeting in the succeeding chapters. These matters, together with the general task of ensuring an efficient take-over of services, will take up the main efforts of the officers. The main goals will be to ensure that the capacity is being created in the new organisation to achieve future objectives. Because of the strict time constraint on policy-planning in this period it seems clear that the aim must be for a flexible, adaptable organisation which is able to meet future challenges placed upon it, rather than a permanent and rigid piece of machinery.

#### THE NEW COUNCIL AND THE CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES

The relationship between the old authorities in their final year and the new authority is in some respects more difficult than that between them and the joint committee. Only a minority of members on a constituent authority may have seats on the new authority. This minority with dual membership—especially those with leadership positions—may find their time heavily involved by the new authority and, in addition to the inherent problems of dual loyalty, they may be able to give much less time to the old authority than in the past. Our research has shown the likelihood that a 'them' and 'us' division will develop within the old authority. There will often

be a difference in party political control between the old and the new authorities. Because the new authority has such a heavy task and the problems of the relationship may be difficult, it may be tempted to ignore the constituent authorities.

We suggest that the new authority should attempt to develop a constructive relationship with the constituent authorities. In Chapter 2 we have discussed the problems of the continuity of capital development, the regrading of staff and of recruitment policies. These problems do not change in nature with the election of the new council. If procedures have been established under the joint committee to alleviate these problems it seems obviously desirable that these procedures should be maintained under the new authority. Where procedures have not been established, the need for them will become more urgent.

The procedures will depend upon the continuance of a co-operative relationship. Communication is the first condition of co-operation and it therefore seems important that the new and the old authorities should interchange reports about decisions of importance to the area.

Difficulties may arise about sharing of staff. Secondments to the joint committee secretariat may be transferred to the 'acting staff' of the new authority or replaced by new arrangements. After the new chief officers have been appointed it will be important to fill some of the key posts in the new departments quickly on a permanent basis. It is likely that these appointments will be generally from the constituent authorities, and that staff will have to be released from service without serving full periods of notice if the preparations for the new authority are not to be delayed. It may be desirable for other staff to divide their time between work for the old and the new authorities. Our researches indicate that a jealousy about the time officers spend on work for the new authority is sometimes felt by some members of the constituent authorities. It seems to us important that officers should, as far as possible, be relieved of conflicting demands in such circumstances. Their responsibilities to the old and the new authorities should be clearly defined and the old authority should accept that the work they can perform must be reduced accordingly.

It is likely that because of secondments and for other reasons many constituent authorities will be short-staffed in the last year. It is important that steps should be taken to allow for this situation and avoid placing an unreasonable load of work on remaining officers. The possibility of constituent authorities seconding to each other staff to cover essential tasks in this period has been mentioned in Chapter 2. There are a number of precedents for



such action in the past.

In a number of cases constituent authorities have reduced committee meetings to those that are essential. Since the constituent authority committees in their final year cease to plan for the future and most of their work tends to be of a day-to-day nature, meetings can be reduced. This reduces the burden on the group most deeply involved in planning for the reorganisation—senior professional and administrative officers. Constituent authorities have in the past reduced the frequency of committee cycles (for example, from monthly to every six weeks or two months), given special power to an 'emergency committee' such as many appoint to deal with urgent business during the summer recess or to the general purposes committee, expected chairmen and vice-chairmen to play a more important rôle in determining day-to-day matters and instructed officers not to call committees unless there are weighty and necessary matters to be dealt with that cannot be handled satisfactorily in any other way.

There will be some matters about which constituent authorities are particularly sensitive. They may be required to hand over buildings and other possessions for which they have feelings of pride and affection. New authorities may accept a need to give special attention to such matters and to give assurances about their future as soon as possible. It has been usual in the past to place local insignia and plate on local exhibition in a library or museum in the area of the constituent authority. There has often been local concern about the continued use of accommodation for the needs of a specific area including public and private meetings. This is also a matter on which assurances may be possible, although in so far as decisions may be bound up with accommodation planning for the direct use of the new authority, the issue may have to be delayed until the location of departmental offices has been worked out in detail.

## 5 Setting up a New Management Structure

A STUDY in forms of management structure for the new authorities has been set up by the local authority associations and the Department of the Environment under a steering committee with Alderman Sir Frank Marshall as its chairman. It is expected that at least a major interim report will be issued in the summer of 1972 and therefore in time to help the new authorities when they decide upon their committee and departmental structures. The terms of reference are to set out considerations which in the opinion of the Working Group of officers "should be borne in mind by local authorities in determining their structures of management at elected member and officer levels including particularly internal arrangements bearing on efficiency in the employment of manpower; to inform them of experience gained by existing authorities which have given special attention to their structures of management in recent years; and indicating which patterns, in the Group's judgment, are most likely to be suitable for the types of authority to be established by the legislation now contemplated."

Here we are concerned with some other problems of innovation and the formation of departmental establishments. One aim of the transitional arrangements affecting staff is given in a Department of the Environment consultation paper of 17 May 1971, as the establishment by the new authorities of management structures which will promote efficient administration and the best use of manpower. The importance of the design of the overall management structure should not obscure the fact that the way in which major innovations are effected and the organisation at departmental level will also be primary factors in determining efficiency.

### MANAGEMENT INNOVATION

There is an important difference between adopting organisational systems with which the participants are already familiar and adopting ideas which are new to the area. If the rôles of chair-

men, committees, chief officers, heads of department and other levels in the organisation follow an established pattern, as happened in the case of the new London Boroughs in 1965, problems of adaptation are extensive, but if the definition of the rôles changes radically, further uncertainties are caused. Additional anxieties arise about authority and status in the new system. People have to develop and establish new rôles and learn to understand the rôles of others. This is not an easy process even in the case of an internal management reorganisation in an authority, and it is harder when it happens when authorities merge so that it is compounded with so many other changes in work and relationships.

Radical changes in organisation may nevertheless be essential in view of the change in scale of organisation and the new goals which the authority may set. To a large extent the new organisation must be of a new nature to many members and officers since they come from constituent authorities which vary more in values, procedures and job-structures than the participants expect. The experimentation in management process and structure in many authorities since 1965 means that in many cases differences in organisation will be wide so that there will be a lack of common norms on which to base the new administration.

We have already mentioned the reasons for minimising change in Chapter 3. It may be argued that in view of the difficult circumstances and lack of time, radical management innovation should be postponed as far as possible. However, major structural change after positions in the new organisations have been filled carries new problems which should also not be under-estimated. It may be strongly resisted not only by vested interests but also because of a belief that there is a need for a period of stability and steady development.

Certainly the capacity to change needs to be built into the new organisation as far as possible. Rigid and detailed job definitions may hinder such a capacity for adaptation, as may structures in which there are many status levels and re-allocation of tasks is difficult. The shorter the time between the elections and the appointed day, the stronger will be the case for the new chief executive officer and council to accept a structure prepared in advance and recommended by the joint committee. In this case it might be wrong to propose highly innovatory proposals in management structure when the new chief executive might have major reservations about their desirability.

A balanced view is necessary of what should be achieved immediately in terms of new concepts of management structure and



### *Setting up a new management structure*

what may be left for study and development over time. It seems important to estimate the costs of radical changes in organisational forms at the same time as their benefits. These costs should include the time that it would normally be desirable to invest in consultation and discussion with councillors and staff about the new changes so that they enter into them with understanding and as cooperative an attitude as possible, or alternatively the costs of foregoing such extended consultation due to the shortage of time for implementation. The objectives of new approaches should be made clear to those who will be closely affected by them wherever possible, although due to lack of time and because the new organisation must inevitably be constructed from the top downwards it must be accepted that the normal processes of consultation will often not be practicable.

#### THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHMENT DESIGN

The initial establishment must be set up before policies have been developed in operational detail. It must create the capacity to maintain existing services and to sustain early development and adaptability. The design must create an integrated staff structure and will require innovative thinking to cope with the problems of a new scale of activity, and often with new features in the area such as new divisions of function between authorities and geographical decentralisation. It must be seen as an opportunity to incorporate those features most likely to lead to high performance. Difficult judgments will be required owing to the high level of uncertainty about future demands on the organisation and perhaps also uncertainty about current needs.

The first responsibility will lie with the body which designs the departmental structure as a whole. In determining the scope of each department it will be necessary to go in detail into those functions which vary in their departmental location in existing authorities or which are often split between two or more departments, as well as 'horizontal' services such as accounting where the nature of the arrangements will determine the load that will fall upon the staff of the various departments. Expert advice will be needed here by the new chief executive officer and the responsible committee. It is not clear at present how far the Local Authority Associations and Department of the Environment study group will be able to give a detailed examination to these matters: certainly local examination will be necessary by experts familiar with existing provisions. If, as suggested, a thorough analysis has been made of these problems in the joint committee period the task will be greatly eased. The new team of chief officers should be given the chance to review the provisions immediately

### *Setting up the new authorities*

after their appointment although time-pressure may in some instances preclude anything but marginal adjustments at this stage.

It is especially important that action should be taken on management services which are to be involved in the process of establishment design. If experts in personnel work, O & M and work study, for example, are to advise the authority on the provisions in the initial establishment, they must be appointed as quickly as possible so that their work and advice can be taken into account from the start. Heads of department normally have the responsibility for the preparation of the initial draft establishments. They will require systematic information about existing services and available staff, and in many cases are likely to have studies of organisational possibilities prepared by working groups of officers in advance of their appointments. They will need the opportunity to consult closely with officers specialising in relevant fields in the constituent authorities. It can no longer be assumed that the head of a large department will be familiar with the needs of all the functions which come under his responsibility. Consultation at section head level will often be necessary. Heads of department will also require advice from those responsible for 'horizontal' coordination between departments. The clerk or chief executive officer will have a general responsibility to see that coordination takes place. The chief financial officer will also have specialist advice to offer.

The head of a large department will require personal assistance as early as possible. A senior administrative officer to work on the details of work systems and to take up at the same time the preparation for the detailed transfer of services would be of especial value.

It will be desirable to secure comparability in the grading of posts between the various departments. An officer with special knowledge of job evaluation and job description skills would be of great value at this stage. Special attention needs to be paid to the comparability of administrative and clerical gradings between departments and the relationship between administrative staff and professional staff gradings. Our inquiries have shown strong resentment among staff over what they see as injustices in these matters and although grievances are probably inevitable whatever the arrangement, it seems important that gradings should as far as possible balance such factors as the training and experience required for a job as well as the level of responsibility. The ideal would be to base gradings on an agreed system of job assessment, and this may be supported by work done at national level. It must be accepted however that the necessary skills for this purpose will often not

### *Setting up a new management structure*

be available or will be in too short supply for the size of the task.

It may be possible to work out guidelines which officers responsible for each departmental plan can apply. It would also be helpful if extensive training on relevant techniques could be given to senior officers likely to be responsible for this work so that they can use expert advice with understanding and confidence.

An establishment officer is normally responsible for examining draft proposals by heads of department to comment on the efficiency of the projected organisation and the comparability of gradings with those of other departments. A committee can then consider any disagreements between the head of department and the establishment officer and come to a decision.

The establishment officer may also be responsible for ensuring that the policy on consultation has been carried out. In most past cases of reorganisation the draft establishments have been submitted to staff representatives for comment and discussion. In the cases we have studied this procedure has worked smoothly and did not raise any serious difficulties. Problems arise where departmental establishments are released in a piecemeal fashion. The earlier establishments set precedents for the later ones and officers are attracted to secure appointments in other departments for the sake of security before they are clear about prospects in their own. Ideally, relationships between establishments for all departments should be studied and anomalies eliminated: they may then all be released at one time. If some departmental establishments fall behind timetable, however, the delay in holding up action on appointments in all departments may not be justified.

### COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ESTABLISHMENTS

The practice in many large authorities is to report on establishment matters direct to a single committee responsible for ensuring parity of treatment for all departments. Individual service committees are not involved directly although, of course, their policy decisions are taken into account when strengths in the department are considered. Informal consultations are usually held between the head of department and the chairman of the service committee concerned on the proposals before submission to the establishment committee.

Reference of establishments to service committees tends to cause delay and can result in further delay if there are references backwards and forwards between committees. In view of the acute shortage of time in the process of reorganisation, there is an especially strong case for eliminating the service committee stage.



### *Setting up the new authorities*

If it is felt that 'service' interests require safeguarding, representatives of service committees might be asked to attend the meetings of the establishment committee at which the relevant establishments are discussed.

The preparation of the first establishments is a means of working out the financial implications of the new scale of administration and estimating the expense of providing an effective organisation. It is closely connected with the responsibilities of the finance committees. This raises few problems if the establishment function is part of the responsibilities of the same committee as that responsible for finance, as was recommended by the Maud Management Committee and is now the case in many local authorities.

Whatever committee or sub-committee deals with the new establishments, it will be required to deal with a heavy volume of urgent work in a short amount of time if appointments are not to be delayed. This may entail frequent long meetings. It should however avoid getting lost in minor detail.

A local government committee has a limited capacity to understand and make fully-informed decisions on establishment details. We believe that control should generally be exercised by laying down guidelines and determining limits of expenditure in consultation with officers, rather than in ways which limit flexibility in searching for more effective organisation. At no time does this apply more than in the first twelve months after reorganisation.

#### ESTABLISHMENT DESIGN

What guidance is available for the design of a new establishment? The following approaches have been used in the past.

- (a) Guidelines or ratios have been sought in national reports and elsewhere, e.g. the staff provision recommended in the Younghusband Report,<sup>1</sup> and the Departmental Working Party on Standards of Public Library Service in England and Wales<sup>2</sup>. Most available figures of this kind need revision and have tended to be unrealistic in view of the supply of staff available. Figures based on an averaging of services over the country would seem to form a valuable reference point in deciding what the local provision should be, although this is only a starting point since need and demand vary greatly from area to area. Authorities should nevertheless be aware whether they are attempting to recruit more or less than a proportionate share of the pool of skilled workers in fields where supply is limited, whether they are staffing above or below the national

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health and Department of Health for Scotland, *Report of the Working Party on Social Workers*, paras. 766-811, HMSO, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education, HMSO, 1962.

### *Setting up a new management structure*

average and how the proposed establishment compares with any recommended standards. It would be helpful if bodies interested in standards in particular services could make studies of these problems on a national basis in time for them to be available to local authorities by the beginning of the year preceding reorganisation. These would carry more weight if they could be carried out by organisations which did not reflect professional interests alone.

- (b) Chief officers drafting establishments in the past have usually made a comparative study of establishments of departments of a similar size and used this either as a basis for planning or as a means to evaluate their own proposals. The approach must be used with care because of the wide variation in functions from department to department and because of the dangers of copying unsatisfactory current practice. It cannot be assumed that a particular level of staffing relates to a given workload. Individual work-performance undoubtedly varies a great deal from department to department. Nevertheless, existing practice does form a valuable if not essential point of departure provided that it is used critically.

National studies might here also save much duplication of effort and could be related to the studies of norms and standards suggested above. It would be essential to break the functions of each department down and attempt to relate staffing to each sub-function so that the implications for departments with different sets of responsibilities could be synthesised. Such studies would also highlight differences in structure and show, for example, how in any authority of a given size-group it has been possible to separate general administrative functions from those requiring professional skills.

If the study of departmental structure has been made which we suggested above, details of management structure will already have been collected and analysed for this purpose. The information obtained could be re-analysed to obtain data on staffing and internal departmental structure to aid departmental organisation design.

- (c) A third method employed in the past has been to multiply the existing provision in a constituent authority by a factor related to the ratio of the population of that authority to the population of the new authority. This is a conservative method, easily understood and takes into consideration local standards. It does not however take into account the consequences of the change in scale of the administration, such as new opportunities for specialisation and economies and new problems of

communication. It can also be misleading where the scope of the new department differs from that of the constituent authority.

- (d) The last method is to aggregate staff in the constituent authorities and regard the summation as the starting point for the new establishments. This approach may appear both attractive and necessary since it overcomes the problems of a mismatch between the staffing requirements of the new department and the available personnel, and relates the workforce to the current level of provision. It may however produce an establishment quite unsuited to the new scale of operations, and like the previous approach it does not take into account the result of thought about design for efficiency and potentiality.

All these methods are highly unsatisfactory when they stand alone but may provide helpful points of reference. The following considerations are amongst the factors that need to be taken into account in the basic planning of the department:

- (a) Analysis of functions, including the distinction between functions requiring professional, technical and administrative skills.
- (b) Estimation of workloads within the different functions. Here data on the existing workloads of constituent authorities is necessary and any expansion or contraction of functions that may be in view.
- (c) A critical analysis of the workforce required for the estimated workload taking into account actual and potential savings made possible by technical innovation. In many cases work-study and other standards will be available: in others careful judgment will be required in which existing productivity in the constituent authorities services should provide a necessary datum. Full account must be taken of the limited extent to which workloads can be satisfactorily defined in many areas, e.g. in casework in the social services, secretarial assistance and policy analysis. Here current experience and estimates of the potentiality required by the new authority become important.
- (d) Groupings and the nature of the relationships aimed at in the new departments. For example, some activities may be most effectively and efficiently pursued by concentrating specialists of the same kind in one unit; in others multi-skilled groups may be more effective. Different arrangements will require different means of communication and control. The degree of co-ordination and supervision which is thought necessary in each function will be an important determinant of the shape of the department.



### *Setting up a new management structure*

- (e) A career structure within the department which provides for the motivation of staff and clearly defined career prospects.
- (f) A flexible structure which enables jobs to be changed and staff moved between jobs to obtain improved performance, and which aids adaptation in meeting unforeseen demands and changes in function. Because of the uncertain premises upon which many decisions about the initial establishment will have to be made and the uncertainty about workloads before policies have been formed and experience obtained, it is important that the new organisation can be modified and adjusted without undue difficulty. It seems important in the first instance to incorporate flexibility in job descriptions and not to have more differences in grading and status than are necessary to fulfil other criteria, so that bars against cross-postings are at the minimum. Wide spans of control may be found to be economical, promote flexibility, shorten vertical lines of communication, help teamwork and provide opportunities for rapid promotion for the exceptional officer where they are possible in the light of the extent of the need for close supervision and for providing sufficient promotion incentive for the average number of staff.
- (g) The costing of the new establishment. Cost-limits must be settled at some stage: in some cases they may be set, provisionally, at an early stage and provide guidance on the capacity that can be built into the new department. The cost of professional fees for some types of work provides a valuable point of reference in certain departments although they should not be accepted uncritically. Architectural departments in particular are familiar with this method of costing. A calculation of the costs of a service in the constituent authorities should also provide a valuable guide.
- (h) Comparability between the gradings of posts in different departments needs to be secured. Whether or not this is done by the use of a standard system of job definition or undertaken by other means, it requires close liaison between new departments and help from an establishment officer at an early stage. Guidelines need to be worked out in the light of the special requirements of different departments. It seems undesirable that there should be a rule on deputy and assistant chief officer appointments, for example, before it has been decided whether or not the deputy level is invariably needed. Appointment of deputies may be desirable in some departments but not in others. If this is the case a single rule on the salaries of deputies and assistant chief officers, as adopted at an

### *Setting up the new authorities*

early stage of reorganisation in some authorities in the past, would be inappropriate.

#### THE TRANSITIONAL WORKFORCE

The workload in the first year after reorganisation will be abnormally high. The process of integration cannot happen overnight and most of the systematic work on the development of new policies, capital programmes and procedures will have to be left until after the appointed day. Many of the initial systems will be adopted on a temporary basis and will have to be re-designed for efficiency in normal circumstances. Most members of staff will have to give much time to learning about their jobs, their new work-relationships and the new area. In some fields of activity an abnormally high workforce will be needed to cope adequately with the initial difficulties if normal standards are to be maintained. It is therefore inadvisable to force immediate economies. The new authorities would be well advised to agree a temporary establishment initially higher than aimed at for the second year of responsibility, assuming that the level of the services remains constant. The first year may be regarded as a period of initial 'tuning-up'. This is not to say that the period of organisational development will not continue beyond the first year; improvement should obviously be a permanent policy. Economies of scale are not easily won, although its costs are felt immediately. Increase in efficiency has to be won gradually through greater specialisation, the flexibility provided by increased resources, systematic method study and automation where possible. The initial establishment may thus be regarded as a temporary establishment in which improvement and economies will be sought subsequently.

In the past some authorities have distinguished between a permanent 'core' establishment and the initial establishment by designating certain posts as supernumerary and due for elimination when their holders are placed elsewhere, resign or retire. While this strategy has served to provide an initial workforce for the transitional period and facilitated subsequent economies, it has certain disadvantages. In many cases it may be doubted if a 'permanent' establishment can be satisfactorily designed in advance of the appointed day. As we have argued above, a flexible rather than a permanent organisation must be aimed at to cope with the many uncertainties in the situation. The second reason against the designation of supernumeraries is that the status is felt to be unsatisfactory by a substantial proportion of officers occupying posts of this kind, and can lead to low morale which may affect other staff. Where an officer is due for retirement in the near future a supernumerary appointment may be the most suitable solution. Where

### *Setting up a new management structure*

a younger officer holds an appointment for an indefinite period and yet feels he has been given an inferior status, it is arguable that the designation is unnecessarily demoralising. It may therefore be thought more satisfactory to place all officers on the same standing in the establishment subject to continuous review. Certain groups of officers may be regarded as temporarily above strength and due for reduction through wastage as the workload declines, without marking particular posts as surplus to normal requirements.

This is not to imply that there will be no need to confer responsibilities of a special and temporary nature on some officers, particularly ex-chief officers, who might not fit in to a post in a normal establishment, *provided that such special jobs can fulfil a necessary function, are suited to their abilities and interests and can be made genuinely temporary.*

There will be cases where the status and qualities of individual officers cannot be satisfactorily assimilated into the new organisation without distorting the establishment or creating superfluous jobs, and in these cases redundancy with compensation may be the only satisfactory solution unless suitable work can be found for them in other authorities.

Where there are shortages of staff in critical areas where work cannot be deferred, there is a strong case for permitting supplementation by temporary appointments at an early stage. Previous cases suggest that payroll work is likely to be one of those areas. We discuss this problem later in our chapter on workload.

A small contingency fund for staffing has been suggested as a means for meeting emergency situations.

#### **'TUNING-UP' ESTABLISHMENTS**

The flexibility, which we have recommended should be ensured in the initial establishments in order that they can be easily developed and made more efficient after reorganisation, can be obtained only if change is possible at departmental level without elaborate procedures. It may be thought desirable in normal circumstances to conduct a systematic O and M review before the establishment is revised. Unfortunately O and M resources are inevitably limited and to wait until an O and M team has reported will in many circumstances delay improvement and militate against flexibility. A less formal procedure may be thought more appropriate in these circumstances by which suggested changes can be referred to the establishment officer for comment and approval and implemented quickly. It may be doubted if committee approval is necessary for most improvements where there is inter-departmental agreement and the cost-limits set by the council are not exceeded or where the changes result in savings.



### *Setting up the new authorities*

Flexibility may come under suspicion from staff who crave certainty and stability after such a period of sudden change. It is clearly necessary to maintain staff confidence in a new approach to organisational development by consultation and discussion. Close understanding with NALGO and other trade unions, which we shall discuss in Chapter 8, are of great importance in this context.

## 6 Appointments and Transfer of Staff

THE new organisation comes to life with the making of appointments. Appointments determine the nature and quality of the advice the new council receives and how its decisions are carried out. They are also the central interest of staff in constituent authorities and almost certainly the main determinant of their morale and motivation. Therefore the importance of the way they are handled cannot be over-emphasised.

### LEGAL SAFEGUARDS

The new Local Government Act will contain provisions for the transfer and fundamental safeguards of staff. These will be elaborated in ministerial orders. The following provisions have been made by legislation and in orders in past cases of reorganisation and appear consistent with the government's intentions for the provisions under the new legislation. They may be modified or extended in future but it seems unlikely that there will be major changes.

All full-time officers<sup>1</sup> in local authorities and *ad hoc* authorities whose functions are to be transferred to the new authorities must be taken over by those authorities. When the old authorities pass out of existence there should be no one left without a body responsible as his employer for ensuring that the provisions of the Act and legal provisions made under the Act are carried out.

In some cases officers will have served areas which are to be broken up between new authorities. If they were employed 'wholly or mainly' (50% or more) in premises transferred to a new authority or operated 'wholly or mainly' from such premises, that authority becomes responsible as their employer<sup>2</sup>. Staff

<sup>1</sup> The term 'officers' here includes manual non-salaried workers.

<sup>2</sup> Department of the Environment & Welsh Office, Consultation Paper, *General arrangements for the transfer of staff*, 26 August 1971. Cf e.g. *West Midlands Order*, Statutory Instrument 2139, s.82, HMSO, 1965; *London Authorities (Staff) Order*, Statutory Instrument 96, vol. 6, s.5, HMSO, 1965. The interpretation by percentage is given in the *London Government Staff Commission Report*, HMSO, 1966.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

not identified with any particular premises but who are engaged 'wholly or mainly' in connection with a particular function (such as headquarters staff dealing with housing) are transferred to the authority that becomes responsible for that function. There may be other provisions in the order to cover other categories of staff. Placement of officers who do not fall unambiguously into these categories must as far as possible be according to schemes agreed between their employers and the new authorities. Provision is made for the reference to a tribunal for arbitration if there is failure to agree on interpretation in individual cases.

In London the Staff Commission watched over the working of the system for transfer, pressed for quick action, gave advice and held a meeting of the establishment officers concerned to sort out difficulties. The Minister took powers to determine transfers in residuary cases<sup>1</sup>.

Provision is made for every officer to enjoy terms and conditions of employment not less favourable than those which he enjoyed before the appointed day until served with a statement in writing referring to the order or regulations and specifying new terms and conditions of employment. The new scales of salary or remuneration are not to be less favourable than those enjoyed previously so long as the officer is "*engaged in duties reasonably comparable to*" his duties immediately before the transfer.

An officer is therefore comprehensively protected until his new employers deliver to him a statement in writing indicating what his terms and conditions of service will be in his new post or, exceptionally, inform him that there is no post in which they can retain him and that he therefore becomes redundant. His salary scale is protected subsequently only if he is appointed to a post with duties 'reasonably comparable' with those of his post before transfer, but whether this is so or not he is entitled to other terms and conditions not less favourable than those he enjoyed immediately before the appointed day. The protection applies to officers appointed by a new authority before the appointed day. There is no time-limit by which an authority must abide in serving new terms and conditions of appointment, and an officer will retain the safeguards if he is transferred with agreement to another authority before the new terms and conditions are served. Disputes on comparability of duties are to be referred to an industrial tribunal.

It will be noted that the provisions contain no guarantee against

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<sup>1</sup> A provision supplementary to the *London Authorities (Staff) Order*, Statutory Instrument 96, HMSO, 1965, contained in the *London Government Order*, Statutory Instrument 654, HMSO, 1965. See also the *London Government Staff Commission Report*, HMSO, 1966.



### *Appointments and transfer of staff*

redundancy, although of course an officer suffering redundancy, and also an officer suffering diminution of emoluments as a result of reorganisation, is likely to be entitled to compensation under the terms of the relevant legislation and the Local Government (Compensation) Regulations<sup>1</sup>.

#### ADVICE AND REGULATION

The government has defined one general aim of the transitional arrangements affecting staff as "the provision of fair, equal and clear arrangements for the transfer or recruitment of staff and to safeguard staff interests"<sup>2</sup>. Much more than legislative provisions are needed to achieve this aim and the government has in the past played an important rôle in giving advice on staff matters after consultation with employers' and employees' representatives and in making arrangements for local oversight of staff transfer. It proposes to appoint staff commissions in England and Wales, to work on lines similar to the London Government Staff Commission of 1963-65. It also appears likely that a commission will be appointed for the health service and that the various commissions will be asked to concert their policies and procedures. At the time of writing it is intended to set up the commissions for England and Wales early in 1972 and reconstitute them formally as soon as the bill is enacted. It is planned that the English commission will consist of not more than five members and is likely to remain in being until the end of 1974. In a Consultation Paper<sup>3</sup> the Department of the Environment have proposed that the general objectives of the Staff Commission would be to promote arrangements for the transfer of staff from existing to new authorities on an equitable and efficient basis, to encourage the best means of recruitment and appointment of officers, to safeguard the interests of the staff affected and to ensure that they receive full information as early as possible on the procedures to be adopted.

The draft legislation defines the purpose of the Commission as:

- (a) considering and keeping under review the arrangements for the recruitment of staff by councils of counties, districts and parishes and for the transfer in consequence of the Act or instruments made under it, of staff employed by local authorities which the Act terminates.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing these are the regulations of 1963 as subsequently amended, but they are under review.

<sup>2</sup> Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, Consultation Paper, *Transfer and Protection of Staff*, 17 May 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Department of the Environment, Consultation Paper, *Staff Commission for England*, 16 September 1971.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

- (b) considering any staffing problems or any matters relating to staff employed by any body affected by reorganisation which may be referred to the Commission by the Secretary of State; and
- (c) advising the Secretary of State on the steps necessary to safeguard the interests of such staff.

It appears that the new Staff Commission, like the London Commission, will have to work by persuasion and without mandatory powers. The London Commission was expected, after study and consultation, to "lay down general principles to which the existing and the future authorities will work." (Hansard, Vol. 675, No. 90, Col. 288.) Behind the persuasion there lies the power of the Minister to give directions to local authorities with respect to the implementation of any advice given by the Commission. (Local Government Bill, 1971.) The London Commission was not an appeals tribunal in any sense neither was it concerned with matters such as pay and conditions of service normally dealt with by the official negotiating machinery. It was not to abrogate the management functions of local authorities<sup>1</sup>. It appears at present that it is the Government's intention that the new commissions' rôles should be similarly limited. Nevertheless, the interests of the new Commission for England at least, under the present proposals, are expected to extend to "supporting steps which may be taken to ensure that as far as possible inequalities and unfairnesses do not arise from late increases by existing authorities in the status and salaries of their staff in order to provide them with a more favourable stepping-off point on reorganisation" and also to "helping to ensure that, as suggested by the Redcliffe-Maud Commission, the new authorities work on realistic staff complements and avoid creating unnecessary posts"<sup>2</sup>. It is by no means clear at present how the Staff Commission will be able to fulfil this last function.

The advice given by the Government and that given by the London Staff Commission on staff matters were closely interconnected and the result of intimate consultation. They covered in particular safeguards against redundancy, procedures for appointment, transfer and assimilation of staff, staff appeals and arrangements for staff consultation. We deal with these issues separately below.

#### 1. SAFEGUARDS AGAINST REDUNDANCY AND LOSS IN SALARY

In 1963 the Minister of Housing and Local Government said that

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular No.6/63, HMSO, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Department of the Environment, Consultation Paper, *Staff Commission for England*, 16 September 1971.

### *Appointments and transfer of staff*

he was satisfied that in London there would be "very, very few" officers who would be offered no post at all with a new authority. He also let it be known that even where this was likely to happen it was his intention to bring to the notice of the new councils the desirability of retaining staff over and above their normal requirements to help in the difficult period of transition. It was suggested that authorities would thus be in a position to employ in a supernumerary or advisory capacity experienced officers for a time, particularly those who were approaching the age of retirement and for whom there might be no permanent employment.<sup>1</sup>

The Staff Commission asked joint committees for preliminary estimates of staffing needs and confirmed that "there was little likelihood of redundancy among the general body of staff but that a number of officers at the higher levels might not be required by the new authorities".<sup>2</sup> In the event 172 officers (out of about 50,000) were declared redundant in London, of whom 78 had been borough chief officers, heads of department or deputies. Only 14 of the 172 asked the Commission to help them to find alternative employment in local government. Redundancy was as rare in the other cases of reorganisation which we studied. It is dangerous however to make assumptions about the effects of future reorganisations without detailed local studies.

To safeguard serving officers the Staff Commission advised restrictions on the recruitment of staff by constituent authorities and initially by the new authorities to those already holding posts in authorities in the local area, unless it was proved necessary to advertise nationally. The Ministry took the lead in advising authorities to "do nothing which might increase the risk of later redundancy or which might prejudice the chance of existing officers being considered for posts which cannot be filled until the new authorities are in being".<sup>3</sup> The case for localisation of recruitment for vacant posts would not be so strong in a national reorganisation. Related to this issue are the questions of whether vacancies arising that cannot be filled locally should be left to stand until the appointed day and whether constituent authorities should exercise restraint over regrading of members of their staffs to protect their position on reorganisation, two issues we have discussed in Chapter 2. The Staff Commission brought the interests of staff in the first matter to the attention of local authorities and raised the second with the National Joint Council.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular No.5/63, HMSO, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> *London Government Staff Commission Report*, HMSO, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Circular No.6/63, HMSO, 1963.



### *Setting up the new authorities*

The need to balance the issues involved in protecting staff interests and securing future efficiency was left to the joint committees and existing authorities to determine. The need to recruit the most able officers available for key posts appears to us to be a predominant consideration. Assurances to staff on security of appointment and protection from hardship must be strong enough to overcome opposition to appointing non-local staff to such posts where this is judged necessary in the interests of the future efficiency of the new administration.

At the joint committee stage it is not possible to do more than give general reassurance about the improbability of redundancy. Some new authorities however have given undertakings of no redundancy after their election, and the issue has often become one upon which staff unions have exercised pressure. We have shown above that very few redundancies have resulted from previous cases of reorganisation. As long as *any* redundancy is threatened people are inevitably worried,<sup>1</sup> but it is important to keep the danger in perspective. If, as suggested here, the groundwork has been prepared by surveys under the joint committee which make reasonable allowances for wastage in the transitional period, it should be fairly clear whether or not there is likely to be a surplus of staff for the new authority at any particular level, and what the costs of a 'no redundancy' pledge would be. It would be possible to exclude certain classes of officer from a general undertaking, but if so it would obviously be necessary to take such officers fully into confidence about their position so that they could decide how to plan for their future careers. (The London Staff Commission gave help in finding posts for redundant officers.) The issue cannot be divorced from that of compensation: if compensation for loss of job is seen as reasonable, committees are more likely to be willing to make officers who will not fit into the new organisation redundant and the officers concerned are more likely to be willing to accept their redundancy and adjust to the idea of a new career.

This is a key issue in which the need to maintain morale and prevent wastage and the need to create an economical and efficient organisation need to be fully considered and balanced for each new authority.

Some authorities have in the past given undertakings to staff that no new terms of service will be less favourable than those formerly enjoyed. This means that officers appointed to posts carrying lower gradings than those they formerly enjoyed retain their former salaries. In some cases authorities have gone further

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 7 for a detailed consideration of the concerns of staff.

than this and undertaken to give officers protected in this way the benefit of future national salary awards which apply to their previous gradings.

Where these provisions are applied the situation arises where an officer may be subordinate to another officer who carries a lower salary than himself—an anomaly which does not necessarily entail practical difficulties.

A point of some difficulty in the past where new authorities have decided to protect salaries has been fees received by officers for extraneous duties, such as conducting elections, attached to the post but not part of its intrinsic functions. In some cases these have been excluded from protection and the few officers concerned have been enabled to claim compensation, if so entitled.

## 2. FILLING POSTS IN THE NEW AUTHORITY

### (a) **Appointments to Chief Officer and Head of Department Posts.**

The Royal Commissions for Local Government in England and in Scotland have laid great emphasis on the importance of the way the most senior appointments are made.<sup>1</sup> In the words of the Scottish Royal Commission:

“It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of getting the right man into the position of chief executive officer right at the start of each authority’s life, and this applies equally to other chief officers. In the nature of things, the new authorities will lack experience in this sphere. They will need expert advice to ensure that the choice is made from as wide a field as possible, and that the qualifications and experience of candidates are properly assessed.”<sup>2</sup>

Both Commissions recommended that staff advisory commissions should advise local authorities on the appointment of a clerk or chief executive and possibly other chief officers.

The appointment of chief officers and heads of department must clearly be made with all possible speed if they are to advise on the organisation of the new authority and the departmental establishments as well as on the many other urgent matters in front of the new authority before the appointed day. It may be expected that the Staff Commissions, like the London Staff Commission, will have an important rôle to play in achieving early appointments.

The relevant national joint committees will have advised on the terms of service for chief officers. The Commissions will be concerned with defining the field of recruitment. If, as recommended

<sup>1</sup> *Royal Commission on Local Government in England*, Vol. 1, Report, Cmnd. 4040, paras. 565–6, HMSO, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> *Royal Commission on Local Government in Scotland*, Report, Cmnd. 4150, para. 1089, HMSO, 1969.

by the English Royal Commission, "the field of choice must be national", a national time-table for appointments will be needed, and perhaps a national 'clearing-house' for applications. One possibility would be to handle local applications locally and applications for posts outside the candidate's 'home area' and, if permitted, from outside the field of local government employment, by a national 'clearing operation' which would supply each new local authority with lists of applicants wishing to be considered for their appointments.

To keep the process short, it will be necessary to secure that there are as few 'rounds' as possible.

Two questions arise here:

- (i) Should the clerk or chief executive officer be appointed first and in time to give advice on the team of chief officers to serve with him? If he is to advise on the structure and jobs of the departmental team, he will have to prepare and submit reports to the council before the other chief officers' jobs and terms and conditions of service can be defined and advertised. This might clearly occasion much delay. If he is simply to be appointed in time to attend and advise on the selection of applicants to chief officers' posts determined by the council in advance, there need be little gap between appointments. If the new council decides to group services under senior chief officers, a similar problem arises with regard to the appointment of the senior chief officers and the heads of services.
- (ii) Should applications be restricted in the first place to local candidates or should nation-wide applications be available for the first short list? To interview local candidates first and ensure that no local applicant measures up to the standards required before advertising nationally would clearly entail considerable delay, and has in the past tended to influence committees to select from officers immediately available on the grounds of shortage of time to do otherwise. If, as in the past, national advertisement has to be cleared with a staff commission or provincial council, there would be further delay.

In an extreme case, with appointments at three levels—clerk, senior chief officer and head of department—taken sequentially and involving national advertisement after local interviews, there could be six sets of interviews. If defining the jobs, clearing the advertisements, advertising, short-listing and interviewing took on average six weeks—perhaps an optimistic allowance—the process would take nine months before heads of services were able to start drawing up their establishments. This omits consideration of the period of notice new officers might have to serve before taking up their new appointments.



### *Appointments and transfer of staff*

If it is thought reasonable that staff should know their new appointments three months before the appointed day and heads of department are to draft their own establishments, it seems necessary to aim at the completion of head of department appointments in the previous summer. There would not be time therefore for more than two consecutive sets of advertisements and appointments. In the county districts such a time-table is impossible and in these cases at least it would appear essential, if staff are to be placed before the appointed day, for the joint committees or their officers to prepare fully worked out departmental structures and draft establishments so that, if they are prepared to accept the joint committee recommendations, the new authorities can proceed directly to the head of department appointments and the heads of department can start the allocation of staff to the establishments without delay.

In the past, time constraints have been overcome by other means. Chief officers and heads of department have in some cases been designated for the new authorities by joint committees. This seems practicable only if the choice is made from candidates within the constituent authorities, and there is no way in which the new authority can be bound to appoint the joint committee's designated heads. Without raising such difficulties the joint committee might agree a departmental structure and the job descriptions for the posts and these might be advertised before new authorities were elected. The applications would then be available for the new council to make short-lists and interview without delay.

In London the designated chief officer posts were taken as standard for all the boroughs, and therefore it was possible for posts in all the boroughs to be advertised at one time by the Staff Commission and for the Staff Commission to receive, sort, copy and pass on applications to the new councils for consideration immediately after their election. This procedure applied to clerks', treasurers', surveyors' and chief education officers' posts. Modified arrangements resulting in somewhat later appointments were made for other chief officer posts. In the discussion above we have assumed that authorities will not necessarily accept a standard traditional post of clerk, treasurer or any other chief officer, since there have been many departures from the traditional rôles in the last six years, and that it will therefore be necessary in each case for the scope of the responsibilities to be made clear. It may not however be thought necessary to define the scope of each post with precision before advertisement. It is possible that a formula can be worked out which will enable posts to be advertised before the election of the new councils.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

As the Royal Commissions have indicated, the importance of these appointments demands the best possible selection procedure. This may be assisted by the appointment of expert assessors<sup>1</sup> or consultants.<sup>2</sup> Those appointing the new officer should have a fully expert view on his professional competence, his managerial ability and his ability to work successfully with colleagues. The concept of corporate management has in recent years led to an amplification of the chief officers' work and responsibilities in many authorities and implies the need for a breadth of interest and qualities which were not previously always assumed to be necessary. An assessment solely from a limited professional point of view might not therefore be thought sufficient. There would appear to be great advantages in ensuring that an assessor is fully conversant with the demands of modern concepts in management as well as with the range of services for which the successful applicant would be directly responsible. Such an assessor might in some cases be difficult to find and in view of the importance of these appointments the council might feel justified in obtaining independent assessments of applicants' capacities both in respect of their professional competence (where relevant) and their ability to manage and to participate in a management team.<sup>3</sup>

There is much evidence that some appointments in past amalgamations have been widely believed to have been influenced by personal loyalties to officers of constituent authorities. This is one reason why it emerged in our inquiries that a large proportion of senior staff would welcome the appointment of consultants or assessors to help to safeguard against bias in appointments. We have mentioned in Chapter 1 the way in which parochial interests and inter-authority suspicions can influence judgment. We stress that councillors should attempt to rise above feelings of this kind and act in the best interests of the new authority. The new authorities to which they are making appointments will often be very different in size from the authorities councillors have known before and so they will contain new problems with which they may not be familiar. Concepts of management are

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<sup>1</sup> The Mallaby Committee on the Staffing of Local Government, HMSO, 1967, recommended that consideration should be given to the appointment of outside assessors (para. 450). The circumstances of reorganisation appear to strengthen the case for such advice.

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the employment of a consultant see, Gould, D., Selection of a Chief Executive, *Municipal and Public Services Journal*, 16 July 1971, pp. 991-2.

<sup>3</sup> See also *Staffing of Local Government*, Report of the Committee, para. 450, HMSO, 1967: "... interviewing panels of elected members for the selection and appointment of principal officers and their deputies should be small."

### *Appointments and transfer of staff*

changing. It is vital that the officers are appointed who are best able to meet these new demands.

In the past chief officers appointed to new authorities from authorities outside the constituent authorities have usually been required to serve their full periods of notice with their previous authority. It seems more important for local government as a whole that adequate resources should be available for the establishment of the new authorities than that staffing should be retained at full strength in an authority due to be superseded. We strongly recommend that a newly appointed chief officer should be released from his former post as quickly as possible and a deputy or other officer appointed to act in his place.

Where a new chief officer is appointed from a constituent authority in the group to be absorbed by his new authority, it seems important that wherever possible he should be fully relieved of his duties in the constituent authority so that he can similarly give all his energies to the creation of a new department.

#### **(b) Appointment of deputies and other senior officers**

In the past some deputy chief officers and heads of departments have been appointed at the same time as their immediate superiors. In other cases (including London) the appointments were made at a later stage. It must not be assumed that all departments will require a deputy head. In practice the rôle of the deputy varies greatly from department to department. It cannot be looked at in isolation from the rôle of the head and the other assistants. The needs for the post (if created) require to be defined in the context of the departmental structure.

In some cases a chief officer may feel a more urgent need to fill other special senior posts. The deputy post should be considered as one amongst a group of key positions which the head of department should agree with the appropriate committee to fill quickly to enable him to undertake the staff work required.

In London there was a difference between the procedure for senior deputy chief officer posts and that for other senior officers, including heads of services such as librarians and housing managers. The procedure followed for deputy posts was the same as that for those of their superiors, while in the other cases authorities were asked to appoint from lists of staff from the constituent authorities forming a borough, unless they contained no one considered suitable, when they might invite applications from elsewhere in London.

On Teesside, on the other hand, officers within the group of authorities were invited to apply for senior posts down to the middle management levels and were then given 'competitive' interviews.



### *Setting up the new authorities*

They were able to state their preferences among a group of posts before interview.

We make no recommendation on the respective merits of formal competitive interviews and informal 'slotting-in' except to note that on the basis of the cases we investigated the informal procedure produced fewer complaints and a higher level of satisfaction. We believe that it is above all important that whatever method is adopted it should be seen as fair and based upon an adequate understanding of the range of opportunities on the part of the candidate and a good knowledge of the candidate on the part of those who make the appointment. In the cases we studied the informal method appeared to have been more successful than interviews in achieving these conditions, especially where the placement of each officer had been discussed with him and had not been simply a 'slotting into post' according to grades and his chief officer's recommendation. The following section covers appointments of senior staff where the procedure resembles that for more junior staff.

#### **(c) Appointments—general**

The following conditions appeared desirable in the light of our inquiries:

- (i) Scrupulous care should be taken to ensure equal treatment of officers regardless of their previous authorities. In most cases one constituent authority will appear the predominant or core authority, and it will be clear that its staff have certain inherent advantages. They are likely to be familiar with a scale of operation closer to that of the new authority than that of which officers from smaller authorities have experience. They will tend to have enjoyed higher gradings in relation to their status because of the larger responsibilities of their authority.

It may appear to many that the reorganisation is an expansion of the core authority, although in principle this is not the case. Thus there is likely to be a tendency to see the core authority officers as 'sitting tenants'. Such feelings are strengthened when the reorganisation is largely 'managed' at officer level by officers of the core authority and when its chief officers are given the highest of the new jobs. The officers from smaller authorities may feel that whereas the abilities of the officers from the core authority are well known to most of those making the appointments, their own are less understood.

An atmosphere of suspicion can in some cases work in favour of officers in small authorities: we have noticed symptoms of a tendency to 'over-compensate' for their inherent disadvantages. Anxieties to give staff of smaller authorities a fair

share of appointments may override objective judgment of ability. Examination of placements in new authorities in the past gave us no indication that staff of small councils were unfairly treated in the vast majority of cases.

It seems important that subjective factors in selection should be eliminated as far as possible, and the stress placed on objective criteria in relation to a particular job. This means that the relevant information before the selectors about each officer should be as complete as possible. The more selection can be seen to be based on full information and a thorough examination of each case, the more confidence it is likely to inspire; and also, the more successful it is likely to be in ensuring that the capacity of staff is suited to the jobs. After considering many comments by chief officers and subordinates on their problems in new authorities together with the circumstances of the appointments, we have little doubt that if there had been much fuller opportunities for discussion of placings with staff and if senior officers had had the time to form a better picture of the abilities and aptitudes of the officers who would be serving under them, there would have been fewer mismatches between officer and post and therefore less strain and inefficiency.

- (ii) Although an officer's grading in his previous authority may be taken as first evidence of his ability to perform work at the level of his previous job at least, it will not be conclusive and there may be instances where an officer is over-graded or where, although his grading may have been appropriate for a particular job in a previous authority, there is no job to which he is suited in the new authority at that level. Late personal re-gradings in constituent authorities resulting from councillors' wishes to put their officers in advantageous positions in the new authority may occasionally lead to these problems. On the other hand, of course, many officers' grades will reflect much less than their immediate potential. Stronger proof of an officer's suitability for a post should therefore be sought than his existing grading.
- (iii) There should be clear delegation of responsibility for appointments. It will be recalled that the Mallaby Committee recommended that principal officers should be given responsibility for selecting and appointing staff on behalf of the authority up to and including third-tier level in departments.<sup>1</sup> Although one new authority in the past felt that

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<sup>1</sup> *Staffing of Local Government*, Report of the Committee, para. 451, HMSO, 1967.

interviews by councillors fulfilled the special need for members to get to know officers and that the delicacy of the situation also made it desirable to associate councillors with interviews at the higher departmental levels for the first appointments, the burden on councillors can be a heavy one and it seems to us that a head of department may reasonably be called upon to shoulder this responsibility from the start.

It is important that a new chief officer should be empowered to make a few key appointments as quickly as possible where the scale of work justifies this. These might include a personal assistant and a senior administrative assistant, as well as clerical assistance, so that he has the necessary resources to plan his new department.

- (iv) There should be delegation of responsibility for junior appointments by a new chief officer where time does not allow him to give them adequate consideration. Whenever possible it seems obviously desirable that the section head should be concerned with the selection of staff to serve under him. Where resources allow, better informed decisions may come from placing responsibility for selection on a group of officers rather than on a single officer. Staffing should be a team effort and close consultation with chief officers of all constituent authorities and, where appropriate, advice from officers or consultants familiar with the type of work and the qualifications required are necessary.
- (v) The most general need felt amongst the staff we interviewed and who answered our questionnaire was for earlier information. It is important to combat the suspicion that procedures are being kept secret for doubtful reasons.
- (vi) Where selection is by competitive interview, officers should not be placed in a position where they feel obliged to apply. This suggestion arises from a number of comments we received from officers who had been invited to apply for posts which they would not otherwise have sought and who complained of the charade-like character of the interviews.
- (vii) Great care should be taken that all officers in constituent authorities are fully aware of the opportunities open to them. Where applications are invited, the advertisements should be circulated quickly to all departments, sections, local offices and institutions. The authorities concerned should agree upon the form of a bulletin of vacancies and the channels through which it is to be distributed. NALGO officials have in the past played an important rôle in seeing that satis-



### *Appointments and transfer of staff*

factory circulation is achieved, and have scrutinised notices to safeguard against any unfairness.

It is important that staff should see the full establishment for the new departments before they are asked to commit themselves to accepting a specific post. Establishments may be displayed and officers should be given the opportunity to discuss their placing on the chart with the officer responsible for making the particular recommendation so that the available appointments can be considered frankly.

- (viii) Before offer of an appointment, an officer should have the opportunity to express his aspirations and discuss his future career opportunities with a chief officer or his representative.
- (ix) Advertisement of outstanding vacancies should be planned so that as far as possible staff have a fair choice between departments. It is desirable that vacancies at a particular level in all departments should be advertised at the same time. The problem is closely linked with that of the release of departmental establishments discussed in Chapter 5. Mobility between different services may often be desirable to achieve a fair distribution of general administrative and other staff and to absorb surplus staff in a particular category in a different type of job, but it is important to avoid the situation where one department, early in getting out its establishment, drains staff from other departments, and another department, last in the queue, ends sadly depleted. It may become apparent that suitable posts cannot be found for some officers—particularly senior officers—within the draft organisational structure. As we have suggested in the previous chapter, some such officers may be given special posts to fulfil temporary needs in the new authority. We repeat, because of the importance of the point, that such a placement should be one that is satisfying to the officer concerned. The ideal post for an officer with a previous high status is often one which will be challenging but not beyond his abilities, relatively self-contained but responsible. If it is not satisfying to him and there is no alternative, his course should be retirement with compensation as appropriate. It is important not to appoint such officers to high-ranking jobs in the main line of command for which they lack the relevant background, abilities or interests.
- (x) Every effort should be made to relieve officers of uncertainty about their futures as soon as possible so that they know their positions in the organisation and have had time to prepare for their new appointments by the appointed day.

## APPEALS

As noted above, appeals on the interpretation of the main legal safeguards in the Order in relation to the facts of an individual case have in the past gone to industrial tribunals, from which there is a right of appeal to the courts. There have in practice been very few appeals of this kind.

In the London reorganisation the Staff Commission played a part in arranging for certain authorities to set up local committees to hear appeals by individual officers on grounds of personal hardship against their proposed allocation to a new authority.<sup>1</sup> The Commission did not define 'personal hardship' as it was felt impossible "to foresee all the circumstances which might arise", and it was felt that a preliminary attempt at definition "would largely defeat the purpose of the arrangements, also, the staff associations must be relied upon to bring forward only those cases in which real hardship is likely to be caused to the individual". Each committee consisted of an independent chairman who was not a member of the councils concerned with the transfer, one or more council members and a corresponding number of members nominated by the staff associations representing the staffs of the council. The Commission appointed a special Appeals Commissioner to give central guidance to local appeals' committees, to give advice to a committee when requested and to examine all decisions and return a case for re-hearing where it seemed to him appropriate. The Commission warned that, "When the time comes to make a formal appointment the new authority will not necessarily be able to make an appointment as favourable as that available with the authority to which the officer was first allocated."

The commonest form of appeal in the past has been on the grounds of wrong gradings. The National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Administrative, Professional, Clerical and Technical Services advised that rights of appeal on salary gradings existed where there was a substantial increase in the duties and responsibilities attached to a post to which an officer was 'transferred' and involved a substantial increase over those undertaken immediately prior to transfer and where the grading of the post was unaltered or where an officer was 'transferred' to a post and the grading was different from that which applied in his case immediately prior to transfer, unless such amended grading was in accordance with a national determination in respect of the category of post concerned. These cases did not differ in principle

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<sup>1</sup> *London Government Staff Commission Report*, Chapter VII and Appendix No.3, HMSO, 1966.

from the grading appeals provided for in the National Joint Council Scheme of Conditions of Service (Section 8). Authorities made their own arrangements for hearing appeals in the first place. It has been found desirable in some cases in the past to extend the right of appeal for six months after the appointed day or even beyond, owing to the initial fluidity of the situation. An appeal against the authority's decision can then be taken to the provincial council.

In some cases authorities have appointed their establishment committees to hear appeals. In other cases special small committees or sub-committees have been set up. It is usual to allow an officer to be accompanied by a union representative or appoint a spokesman. It emerged from our study that advantages were believed to accrue from having an establishment officer to carry out a job evaluation and make a report on each claim, perhaps jointly with the officer's head of department, when the appeal came before the establishment committee.

#### CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

We have seen that in cases of local government reorganisation in the 1960s terms and conditions of employment other than salaries were protected by law at a level not less favourable than those enjoyed immediately before the appointed day. Because there was general agreement that conditions must be equated throughout the new authorities as soon as possible, it might be expected that the result was a general levelling up for staff to the best conditions amongst the constituent authorities. This was not entirely the case since officers from a constituent authority who insisted on retaining all privileges unchanged might be denied the benefit of general rules adopted for the staff as a whole. Staff therefore had reason to accept compromises which would establish a set of conditions which *on balance* were no less favourable than those in their previous authority. Councils set as an aim the achievement of average conditions and the attainment as soon as possible of consistency amongst all staff. Thus a large element of negotiation was involved.

There was a general improvement in conditions of professional, administrative, technical and clerical staffs, although the differences tended to be small due to the existence of the national scheme of conditions. Variations between constituent authorities may be expected in hours of work, general holidays and leave entitlements, leave of absence for special purposes, e.g. bereavement, revision for examinations, service in non-regular forces and representation on Whitley and other public bodies, special local salary weightings, means of recognising long service, rulings on trade union member-



### *Setting up the new authorities*

ship, vehicle and travelling allowances, period of notice to determine appointments, training grants and day release, supply of telephones and the extent of acceptance of NJC rulings on other matters.

This list is not comprehensive but may be used as an initial check and basis for a survey. Some difficulty may be experienced with informal practices which have become long-established ('Spanish customs'). It may be held that a custom maintained for a long period, e.g. a customary holiday, is a condition of service although its institution can be traced to no specific decision by a council, but the issue is one of doubt that could not be resolved in a case of dispute without resort to an agreed arbitrator or to the courts.

When we asked about conditions of service in our inquiry, officers often referred to their accommodation and problems of parking cars. In many cases there had been a deterioration in the physical conditions under which they worked which they had found depressing and which appeared to have had an adverse effect on morale.

For many officers reorganisation will involve new and difficult journeys to work. These had been ameliorated in one case we studied by the provision of a private coach service for staff. The National Joint Committee has prepared a scheme for disturbance and travelling allowances in connection with local government reorganisation which covers increased travelling expenses for six months for officers not forced to move their homes and expenses in connection with searching for accommodation, removal, lodging for four months, legal fees connected with the sale and purchase of a residence as well as a disturbance and/or settling-in allowance. There is provision for extending these allowances in case of exceptional hardship. There are local precedents for extension of the six months for excess travelling expenses to twelve months.<sup>1</sup>

The problems of equating terms and conditions of service are much greater amongst industrial workers than amongst the professional, administrative and technical staff. Customary and other conditions vary much more between authorities and departments and more differing interests are involved both on the employers' and the employees' side. Besides the issues mentioned above incentive bonus schemes are at stake. These are likely to differ sharply from group to group and these differences may cause dissatisfaction and industrial dispute if allowed to continue for long.

The matters involved are of a very technical nature. Councillors

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<sup>1</sup> National Joint Council for Local Authority Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical Services, *Scheme of Conditions of Service*, 7th Edition, January 1971, Appendix E.

### *Appointments and transfer of staff*

who come from small authorities may find it difficult to adjust from a situation in which they are intimately involved in negotiations to one in which they have little alternative to leaving the groundwork of schemes to specialists. Departmental officers may also need to pay much more heed to the need for inter-departmental consultation and possibly to giving a prominent rôle to an officer with a general responsibility for terms of service working across departmental lines.

Experience in the sample of amalgamations which we studied showed that whatever the size of the authority, the reconstruction and general application of bonus incentive schemes took longer than anticipated. To achieve integration in two years would be above average. Employees can easily be alienated and defensively cling to personal conditions of work if they believe there is a threat to their fundamental interests.

Because of the constant threat to industrial relations involved in running different schemes side by side we think there can be little doubt that schemes of payment for manual workers should be surveyed and work on a new scheme started at the earliest opportunity. This is a matter where there will often be strong reasons for the employment of outside help because of the abnormally heavy load of work required, the virtues of help from experts with wide experience and the advantages in terms of industrial relations in having a third party dealing with a sensitive area. There is also a strong case for the new authority to appoint its work-study staff as early as possible: or indeed wherever it is possible for a work study team to be assembled under the joint committee's auspices to begin investigations on an inter-authority basis. This is true whether the new authority decides to implement a scheme unaided by consultants or to have its own staff working with consultants.

## 7 The Workload and Reactions of Staff

REORGANISATION entails drastic, far-reaching changes for the general body of staff. Before reorganisation becomes a serious possibility each officer has an allotted task which he performs under the direction of superior officers with whose foibles he is familiar, and alongside colleagues most of whom he knows well enough to take for granted. His office may well be situated near his home and his children's schools. His place in the hierarchy may not be exalted but it is a recognised one. He has an accepted place in the network of friendships and acquaintances in his existing authority. In other words in most cases he has adapted himself, as far as he is able, to an environment which he has chosen, to some extent at least, of his own volition. Gradually, it becomes increasingly likely that an upheaval in his working life, is about to be imposed upon himself, and perhaps also upon his family.

Staff may welcome the impending changes. They may look upon them as an opportunity to escape from a rut where they have perhaps remained for too long. They may look upon the new authority as providing greater opportunities for promotion, the chance to do more interesting work and to work with new colleagues and 'bosses'. Or they may fear the loss of their jobs and be worried and resentful about changes which they feel are being imposed on them. They may feel that they, and their work, will not be 'valued' as it has been in the past. We will consider in this chapter whether either of these attitudes prevailed in the cases we examined in our research and also, in so far as staff were anxious, whether their worries were unnecessary or avoidable. We shall then consider officers' reactions to their work after the appointed day.

### WORKLOAD

During the period leading up to the appointed day exceptionally heavy workloads may subject officers to extra strain. Conversely,



### *The workload and reactions of staff*

there is a danger that officers may be frustrated and demoralised by inactivity as some of the work of the constituent authorities comes to a halt or declines.

Reorganisation imposes a prolonged and highly abnormal workload on staff in key managerial positions. In our inquiries we distinguished three phases. The first is a period of preparation which starts as soon as participation in planning for reorganisation begins. Work for the new authorities is undertaken by the officers concerned on top of their normal duties. Where officers are already well stretched in their work, either the work for the old or that for the new authorities must suffer unless they can pass some of their normal work to colleagues or cope with the additional load at weekends and late at night (senior officers engaged in committee work quite usually have many evenings taken up at normal times and in many cases take no compensatory time off during the day).

There follows a second phase of intensive activity in the months before and after the appointed day when the new systems are set up and must be made operational. At this time a proportion of the staff are fully stretched in meeting the most immediate demands of the situation. Long-term planning is postponed and routine work that can be temporarily abandoned is allowed to accumulate. In the third phase this accumulation must be tackled, the organisation must be 'tuned up' to ensure that the advantages of the new scale of activity are systematically exploited and long-term planning must be put on a firm basis.

We found that during the two years before reorganisation work had, in most cases, been distributed very unevenly amongst staff. There was a tendency for senior staff of the largest or 'core' authority to involve themselves deeply in the preparations and for staff in the smaller authorities to be relatively under-occupied with reorganisation matters. In two cases where the burdens had been shared equitably between staffs of all the authorities concerned, two additional factors had placed a heavy strain on officers of the small authorities.

The first was staff shortage due to wastage caused by uncertainties about the future. This was acute amongst groups of workers with good alternative opportunities in a time of high employment but it is a possibility not to be ignored today. We have already received reports from smaller authorities of staff resignations precipitated by anticipation of local government reorganisation in the 1970s. This is one reason why re-assurance to staff about their futures in all authorities, but especially in the 'peripheral' authorities of a group to be amalgamated, is important.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

The second cause of strain was the acceleration of local development. We have described in Chapter 2 how, as the life expectation of some authorities contracted, they entered into a phase of high activity, bringing forward schemes that had lain dormant and accelerating work in progress. Such a development places heavy pressure on staff concerned with such schemes, which may aggravate and be aggravated by staff turnover. Anxieties may add to the strain where officers are unable to fulfil what is expected of them in connection with work for the new authority because of pressures from the council in the old authority.

In the main constituent authorities we found that a build-up in work went on through their final year, growing rapidly in the final six months and leading to a hectic period in the three months before the appointed day. It is inevitable that the weeks immediately before the appointed day are intensely busy with preparations for change and that those which follow are at least as difficult. Removals from building to building are time-absorbing when time is most valuable, and lead to consequential problems in settling down. One chief officer estimated that a move involved a loss of a fortnight's time. The strain is increased by the need to establish communication and understanding with new sets of officers, to learn a mass of new facts, find sources of essential information amongst unknown staff, to master different filing systems, new procedures and the use of new equipment, and sometimes to learn new skills. We have pointed out in Chapter 5 that the introduction of new management ideas adds to the problems of adjustment.

There is a temptation to drop routine activities such as balancing pay-rolls and rent accounts and following up debtors, leading to situations which are very difficult to retrieve later without a very heavy investment of time.

Mr. A. D. Caddick, Borough Treasurer for Warley, describes a 'vicious circle' experienced in his new department and which we found in other cases, particularly on pay-roll preparation. The more the staff are under pressure, the more mistakes occur; the more mistakes the more queries; the more queries the less staff have time to give to preparation for the next month's salaries, the more they come under pressure and the more mistakes they make. Additional expenses involved in breaking 'vicious circles' of this nature such as by temporary supplementation of staff will be fully justified by the saving of time in the long run and easing of long-term pressure of a kind that leads to breakdowns and is destructive of morale.

All the evidence indicated that the period of heavy pressure lasted for at least six months after the appointed day and that it

### *The workload and reactions of staff*

was even then slow to ease. In fact a condition of 'normality' was craved similar to stable conditions in the past, but two to four years afterwards it still seemed very distant in many departments. The pressure has borne particularly hard upon a few departments, and of these the treasurers' departments stand out as invariably overstretched in the accountancy and payments sections. Payment of salaries and wages is an activity critical to morale and one which, perhaps more than any other, requires careful planning and temporary supplementation of staff to avoid breakdown or an unreasonable degree of pressure. Sections in other departments such as housing and education which cannot afford any arrears of work may be similarly affected. Delays in such a matter as rent collection can lead to highly obdurate problems.

#### SUGGESTIONS

- (a) The reduction of workload on key staff should be a primary objective in planning for the period of transition.
- (b) Central government departments should, as soon as possible, review the demands they make upon local authorities for information in the two years before the appointed day and in the following year and try to ensure that nothing is requested which is not essential. It is government policy to waive inessential controls for the new local authorities and in some cases these might be waived earlier in order to simplify the work of existing authorities: government should be chary of innovations which involve additional work for local authorities in the period 1972-74.
- (c) Local authorities should study ways to reduce the burden of routine work on officers involved in preparations for the new authorities. In particular they should reduce committee meetings wherever possible, as suggested in Chapter 2. Work undertaken should be related to the available staff resources after allowing for the work officers are expected to carry out for the joint committee and the new council.
- (d) A fair distribution of the reorganisation tasks before the appointed day should be sought between sections in the same department and between departments of different authorities with the object of spreading the workload and involving all in the planning of the new authority.
- (e) The tasks falling immediately before and after the appointed day should be analysed with a view to reducing the peak load by:
  - (i) anticipatory integration and testing of new systems so



### *Setting up the new authorities*

- that procedures are tried out and staff familiarised with them;
- (ii) identifying tasks that can be brought forward and prepared before the appointed day;
  - (iii) identifying tasks which can be allowed to continue on their former basis for each constituent authority area and where integration can be undertaken at a later time when the severest pressures of reorganisation are over.
- (f) The delegation of work to lower levels than is customary.
  - (g) Wherever possible jobs should, immediately after reorganisation, continue to be carried out by the same people or at least supervised by people previously responsible for the same work. In many cases it should be possible to allow people to 'take their work with them' or to carry on with their normal work for the same clientele. This is the 'continuity principle' defined by the late Mr. R. J. Meddings, Town Clerk of Wolverhampton: "Avoid the risk of disaster by adopting the general proposition that everyone will go on doing on 1 April exactly what he was doing on 31 March and would do it unless and until he was told differently."
  - (h) Staff should be appointed or placed as soon as possible to plan the transition within their own area of knowledge and to learn something of the new areas and staffs for which they will be responsible.
  - (i) Constituent authorities should endeavour to ensure that records are up to date on the appointed day and, if possible, standardised (see Chapter 3). This will reduce initial problems substantially. The need for attention to records may be particularly important at the district council level since some of the smaller authorities will have been able to rely on officers' personal knowledge and will not therefore have found detailed records to be necessary.
  - (j) Responsibilities should be clearly defined with regard to work for the new authority from the earliest stages.
  - (k) In critical areas of work where failures would lead to serious consequences, e.g. payroll<sup>1</sup> and rent collection, planning

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<sup>1</sup> Payment of salaries and wages is the most critical activity of all in a large amalgamation. The following points seem important: precise information from constituent authorities about pay points, etc., at least one member of staff from each constituent authority assisting with detailed knowledge of local systems, action time-table allowing for incidence of Easter, supplementation of payroll staff by other officers with relevant experience if possible (e.g. internal audit staff), assistance from part-time staff with simpler tasks such as putting up wages and balancing of pay-sheets without delay.

### *The workload and reactions of staff*

should be carried out with especial care and staff should be supplemented by temporary appointments and other means wherever the workload would otherwise appear unreasonable. Supplementary temporary appointments may be necessary in constituent authorities with major problems over breaking up records etc. If additional staff are drafted in at a later date existing staff may be too busy to give them the preliminary training in procedures necessary if they are to be of proper value. The extension of service of staff due for retirement and recall of retired staff on a temporary basis may provide valuable help by experienced officers. In some large departments a special group of staff may well be appointed to seek out points at which there is trouble and overloading and give appropriate help.

- (I) Departments should keep records of overtime by officers not entitled to payment under the national scheme to provide a basis for such *ex gratia* payments as the old and new authorities may decide to make.

#### STAFF MORALE, TURNOVER AND REGRADINGS

There are sound arguments for, as far as possible, carrying out the reorganisation in such a way that most staff look forward to the emergence of the new authority and experience the minimum amount of anxiety and worry. This is the humane policy to follow. But apart from this the level of efficiency in an organisation is closely dependent on the state of staff morale. If staff are worried, anxious, disturbed, resentful or angry, there will be a serious impact on their work. This may be expected to reflect itself in their mutual relationships, their relationships with the public and in their willingness to accept change and arrangements for improved efficiency. Poor morale may also lead to a higher rate of staff wastage than usual, particularly amongst staff who can easily find jobs outside local government.

Staff losses will, in themselves, exacerbate the problem of staff morale since they will result in heavy work loads for the remaining staff with consequent strain and possible dissatisfaction at having to reduce the standard of work.

In the past another 'side effect' of high staff wastage has been to encourage the abnormal regrading of the remaining staff. Subsequently rumours about this regrading persuaded other authorities to do the same. However the Government, in conjunction with the Local Authority Associations, has now taken steps designed to control late increases in pay. The Local Authorities' Conditions of Service Advisory Board has issued guide lines as to the circumstances in which increased remuneration should be considered

(March 1972). The Government has so amended the Local Government Bill (Clause 249) that it has statutory powers to direct an authority to implement any advice on proposed salary changes.

During the period leading up to the forthcoming reorganisation, staff will not be able to escape on the same scale as in the past to authorities which are remaining undisturbed. But there will still be a tendency for staff wastage rates to be higher than normal. There may be for example some movement of staff to the London area: although this can have only a negligible effect on the rest of local government considered as a whole, particular authorities may be embarrassed by the loss of key officers. Staff may move to the 'core'<sup>1</sup> authority in any group in order to secure the positions they want rather than having to accept the ones to which they are allocated. Some officers may, as in the previous reorganisations, move from the 'core' to the smaller authorities, particularly if the latter are short of staff, in order to secure promotions which will place them at an advantage when the separate groups of staff are combined. In the past many staff, particularly typists and women clerks, have moved to the nationalised industries, the police, other parts of the public service or private industry and commerce. No doubt this will happen again during the forthcoming reorganisation, the overall extent depending on the state of the national economy and the consequent volume of unemployment in the country as a whole. The precise rate of staff wastage will vary from one authority to another according to the local demand for labour and the success of each authority in maintaining the morale of its staff.

#### THE REACTIONS OF STAFF TO REORGANISATION

If an authority is to pursue an active policy designed to minimise the amount of anxiety and worry amongst its staff it must know something about the kind of things which are most likely to worry officers and about the kind of officers who are most likely to be worried. In the light of this knowledge it is then possible to decide how far the worries can be minimised and how far they must be accepted as an inevitable concomitant of a changing situation. Our discussions with senior officers and with rank and file staff suggested that officers' reactions to the reorganisation were very varied. Some welcomed the impending changes whilst others opposed them. Some were worried about the impact of the changes on their own personal situation whilst others had favourable expectations.

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning the largest constituent authority in any amalgamation or extension.



### *The workload and reactions of staff*

On the basis of the interviews alone it was impossible to gauge whether one attitude or the other was predominant. We therefore distributed a questionnaire to a number of individual officers to find out what proportion were looking forward to the reorganisation and what proportion were worried about various aspects of the impending changes.

We would have preferred to circulate our questionnaire to a random sample of all the officers employed in the seven new, or extended, authorities on the appointed day. But it would have delayed our inquiries, and placed a heavy burden on local government staff, if every department had been asked to supply a list of the staff employed on the appointed day, particularly since this occurred two or, in the case of the West Midlands, four years before we compiled our questionnaire. Consequently we decided to distribute the questionnaire to all the officers employed in one particular department on the appointed day. The engineer and surveyor's department was selected partly because of the fairly large numbers employed and also because of the variety of its groups of staff. For the sake of consistency certain sections, such as planning and parks, which are included in some engineers' departments but not in others, were excluded.

The attitudes of officers to the impending nation-wide reorganisation will not necessarily be the same as their attitudes to the reorganisations which we have studied. There are many points of difference. But we believe there is sufficient similarity to warrant the assumption that the same kind of officers will tend to have worries about the same aspects of reorganisation.

The questionnaire was distributed to 574 officers and 242 usable questionnaires were returned. The overall response rate was therefore only 42%; but 90% of the questionnaires sent to Teesside staff were returned and it is significant that there is a substantial measure of agreement between the results for Teesside and those for the sample as a whole. We have, however, treated certain results with caution because the number of officers in certain categories is rather small and, in our interpretation of the results, we shall only attach importance to substantial differences between one category of response and another.

#### THE EXTENT TO WHICH STAFF ARE LIKELY TO WELCOME REORGANISATION

Our investigations suggest that the reorganisations which we studied were welcomed by just under a third of the staff, viewed with mixed feelings by somewhat over a third, and opposed by about a fifth whilst about a tenth had no feelings one way or the other. The impending reorganisation in 1974 is on a much

larger scale and will involve far greater changes for many staff than did the reorganisations which we studied. Consequently we cannot assume that officers' feelings about reorganisation will be the same as in the past. There may be greater opposition because the changes are more drastic. The 'core' authorities we studied did not, for example, suffer any loss of functions. Also we have found that staff attach great importance to the convenience of their place of work and there will be many cases in the forthcoming reorganisation where this is shifted a considerable distance. On the other hand there may be less opposition because the changes will be nation-wide, instead of being imposed on only a section of the local government system: also there is a consensus of opinion that reorganisation is necessary, although the precise form it should take is disputed.

Nevertheless, although we cannot extrapolate in any exact sense from previous experience, it does seem probable that the council members and leading officers who are implementing the reorganisation can assume that as in the past, (a) the changes will be welcomed by a sizeable minority of officers, and that (b) an even larger proportion will view the changes either with indifference or with mixed feelings. Downright opposition may well come from only a small minority of staff. Apparently, although local government officers do not, in general, wholeheartedly welcome change neither do they oppose it. One objective of those responsible for the management of reorganisation should, we believe, therefore be to dispel as far as possible both opposition and the reservations of those officers with mixed feelings.

There is, of course, likely to be more opposition amongst the staffs of smaller authorities who tend to feel they are being 'taken over' in spite of the fact that the reorganisation is by setting up entirely new authorities. We therefore compared the attitudes of these officers with those of officers from the 'core' authority. Amongst a sample of staff in three amalgamations only 10% of the officers from the 'core' authorities said they were opposed to the impending changes as compared with nearly 40% of the officers from the smaller authorities. Nevertheless it is significant that over half the officers in the 'core' authorities were either opposed to reorganisation or viewed it with mixed feelings. This is particularly important as we noticed that there was a tendency for the chief officers in 'core' authorities to think that their staff were not worried since many might expect to be promoted and the others would not lose any salary. Consequently they sometimes did not reassure their staffs about the future.

Officers who have 'been' with an authority for some time are, it may be assumed, more likely to oppose reorganisation than are

newly appointed staff. Our evidence suggests that opposition only becomes more extensive when officers have more than five years' service. Our survey showed that beyond this point a quarter, or slightly more, of the officers opposed reorganisation as compared with about 14% of the shorter service staff. But whether officers have 6, 15 or 20 years' service apparently makes very little difference to the extent of the opposition.

Officers' reactions to the prospect of reorganisation are not as closely related to their ages as one might expect. Officers between the ages of 21 and 50 appeared to be slightly more favourably disposed to the prospective changes than were younger and older officers but the differences were only marginal. The somewhat more extensive opposition of officers aged more than 50 is not unexpected but the fact that only a fifth of the youngest officers welcomed the impending changes is both surprising and important. As we shall see in this age group there was quite extensive worry about many aspects of reorganisation. Since young people are the ones who can most easily move to jobs outside local government the damage which may be inflicted on their authorities is obvious.

Officers may oppose reorganisation, or view it with mixed feelings, for altruistic or purely selfish reasons or because they think it will be harmful in both respects. An officer may, for example, believe that reorganisation is not in the interests of the local population because it will have adverse effects on the degree of democratic control and/or the quality of services. As far as his own personal position is concerned, he may fear a reduction in the material rewards which he receives for his work and/or a decline in the satisfaction he gains from his work and from his rôle in the organisation.

Some officers are likely to be very worried and anxious about the future. In discussion some of the staff in smaller authorities spoke of 'a sense of doom', 'a sense of foreboding', 'fear and distrust', 'considerable anxiety', 'a sense of unease', 'an unsettled atmosphere', 'the loss of a sense of belonging' and of other similar feelings.

In the 'core' authorities the position was rather different. As we mentioned earlier a number of staff had to cope with exceptionally heavy work loads and were subject to considerable strain, resulting, in some cases, in damage to physical or mental health. Some of the chief officers, however, found it an exciting and challenging experience. Indeed one referred to it as 'the most interesting period of his life'. But at other levels in the hierarchy although worry was less extensive and less severe than in the smaller authorities some officers had misgivings about the establishment of the new authority. Some officers were worried by the idea of



### *Setting up the new authorities*

having to work in a larger organisation and of becoming just units in an impersonal organisation. A 'loss of identity' was feared. They were concerned about the possibility of promotion being 'blocked' by an influx of outsiders and about having to work for new 'bosses'.

The extent of worry amongst staff prior to reorganisation should not be exaggerated. The replies to our questionnaire show that a substantial proportion had favourable expectations about various aspects of reorganisation and that although the reactions of another sizeable proportion were not favourable, neither were they worried. For example, as far as the prospects of being given a job in the new authority were concerned, 48% of the sample had favourable expectations and 27% had neither favourable expectations nor worries: 46% had favourable expectations about their new salary grading and 36% were neutral: 45% had favourable expectations about the degree of variety in their work whilst 30% had neither favourable expectations nor worries.

If we consider the more intangible aspects of an officer's employment which affect the rôle which he plays in his working environment we find that on the whole somewhat fewer officers had favourable expectations. As many as 42% had favourable expectations about 'agreeable working relations with colleagues' but only 35% had favourable expectations about working in a larger organisation, 33% about their relations with their future 'bosses', 35% about their future status, 32% about the recognition and appreciation of their work by others in the new authority and 29% about their future authority or influence over others.

We listed in the questionnaire 20 aspects of a reorganisation which might arouse favourable expectations ranging from such concrete matters as the convenience of the place of work, promotion prospects, travelling expenses and hours of work to such intangibles as those mentioned above, as well as the 'sense of achievement in work', and 'the opportunity for independent thought and action'. The general nature of officers' reactions can be gauged by the fact that, considering these 20 aspects, 5 of them gave rise to favourable expectations amongst more than 40% of the sample, and 13 to favourable expectations amongst more than 30% of the sample. All 20 aroused favourable expectations amongst 8% or more of the sample.

#### NATURE OF WORRIES

None of the aspects of reorganisation which we mentioned in the questionnaire was a cause of worry to more than 30% of the sample as Table 1 shows. But it is worth considering what can be done to alleviate causes of worry since anxiety amongst

### *The workload and reactions of staff*

even a minority of staff will have a harmful effect on morale and motivation.

*Table 1. Officers' expectations about aspects of the impending reorganisations: in rank order according to the proportion of officers in the sample who were worried*

(Source: replies to 242 questionnaires)

	<i>Worried</i>
	%
Convenience of future place of work	29
Working in a larger organisation	28
Relations with officers to whom you are responsible	25
Sense of status in your work	24
Opportunity to develop personally in your work as you would like	22
Recognition and appreciation of your work by others in the authority	20
Opportunity for independent thought and action	20
Sense of achievement in your work	19
Being given a job in the new L.A.	19
Promotion prospects	18
Having to adapt to new methods of work	17
Having to adapt to a new type of work	17
Variety in work	14
Being given a supernumerary post	13
Salary grading	13
Authority or influence over others in your work	12
Agreeable working relations with colleagues	12
Travelling expenses	12
Fringe benefits	11
New hours of work	8
Contact with elected members	6

It may be argued that our figures exaggerate the true extent of worry since some people are natural worriers and instinctively say they are worried whatever question they are asked. But this is probably not an important element in the replies which we received. If we consider the 242 officers who replied to the questionnaire we find that only 14 said they were worried about 13 or more aspects of reorganisation: 115 regarded fewer than 10 aspects as a cause of worry.

If we are to suggest ways in which the worries of staff can be reduced, we must first consider the nature of their worries.

The most important result to emerge from our work on this subject is that more staff were worried about the convenience of

### *Setting up the new authorities*

their future place of work (29% of the whole sample) than about any of the other 21 aspects of reorganisations which we mentioned, with worry about working in a larger organisation running a close second. (28% of the sample.) Since only 12% of the sample said they were worried about additional travelling expenses, worry about the location of place of work evidently involved far wider considerations than this. Our discussions with officers suggest that they and their families did not like the prospect of a change in the pattern of their lives as a result of the husband no longer working near home. One implication is that it might be advisable, where possible, to give staff whose skills are applicable to more than one department, such as certain clerks and secretarial staff, the option of working in the decentralised office of another department. Alternatively, some may choose to move to other new authorities whose offices are more conveniently placed. Either alternative is preferable to staff being lost to local administration altogether.

From discussions during our interviews it is clear that worries about working in a larger organisation were largely due to the fear of becoming a faceless unit in an impersonal organisation. As we suggested in Chapter 3 the main remedy here is to encourage as extensive a participation of staff as possible in the creation of the new authority. This can, for example, be achieved by the delegation of responsibilities and the establishment of inter-authority working groups.

The second important result to emerge from our inquiries is that before the impending nation-wide reorganisation many officers are likely to be worried about their rôle in the new organisation and the satisfaction they will obtain from their work. Fewer officers said they were worried about more tangible aspects such as being given a job in the new authority (19%), future salary grading (13%), promotion prospects (18%) and having to adapt to new methods and types of work (17%)—than were worried about more intangible aspects—future status (24%), 'the opportunity to develop personally in your work as you would like' (22%) and 'the recognition and appreciation of your work by others in the authority' (20%). Only 11% of the sample were worried about fringe benefits and 8% about new hours of work. Our figures may be subject to some distortion because of the respondents' tendency to reflect an idealised self-image. It may, for instance, be argued that, in spite of the questionnaire being confidential, officers would be reluctant to appear too mercenary by saying they were worried about financial matters. But, equally, it can be argued that officers would be reluctant to say they were worried about status. Making due allowances for possible error, it remains



### *The workload and reactions of staff*

true that officers are likely to be especially worried about their rôle in the new authority and about the sense of satisfaction they will obtain from their work. Whether these intangible aspects, or the more commonly recognised causes of worry such as possible redundancy and future salary are the greater causes of worry will depend partly on whether any pledges are given to staff as to 'no redundancy' and 'the protection of salaries', or the strength of the informal reassurance they receive on these matters.

Nevertheless, it is clearly advisable, when considering the impact of any decisions or procedures on officers' morale, to assume that staff will be worried by both such obvious matters as salary and promotion prospects, and by the more subtle factors which affect the satisfaction obtained from the working portion of their lives.

It is also important to remember that worry will not be disseminated evenly throughout an authority. Within any group of authorities which are due to be amalgamated there is likely to be far less worry in the largest of the authorities (which we have termed the 'core' authority) than in the smaller authorities and also less worry in the intermediate age groups than amongst the youngest and oldest officers. Officers in different occupations are likely to have slightly different types of worries but our evidence suggests that there may be little variation between the occupational groups in the general extent of worry.

#### **'CORE' AUTHORITIES AND SMALLER AUTHORITIES**

Contrary to some expectations there is likely to be a significant amount of worry in the 'core' authorities, but smaller in extent than in the smaller authorities. A few examples from our inquiry will illustrate the divergence: 18% of the officers from 'core' authorities were worried about the convenience of their future place of work as compared with 49% of the staff from smaller authorities. As far as worry about working in a larger organisation is concerned the relative figures were 22% of the officers from 'core' authorities and 40% of those from smaller authorities. In connection with the 'opportunity to develop personally in your work as you would like' the comparative figures were 11% and 41%. Only 13% of the staff from 'core' authorities were worried about being given a job in the new authority as compared with 31% of the staff from smaller authorities; only 12% from the 'core' authorities were worried about having to adapt to new methods of work as compared with 36% of the staff from smaller authorities. 25% from smaller authorities were worried about their future salary grading as compared with 6% from 'core' authorities.

In the case of each of the 21 prospective changes which we mentioned in our questionnaire, the proportion of officers from the

### *Setting up the new authorities*

smaller authorities who were worried was at least twice as great as the proportion from the 'core' authorities. But in some cases the proportions diverged by a factor of three or four.

#### THE ATTITUDES OF YOUNGER AND OLDER OFFICERS

In our sample, the number of officers below the age of 21, and over 56 years of age was small. However, the response suggests that worry is likely to be more extensive amongst the officers who are less than 21 years of age and amongst officers aged 56 and over than it is in the intermediate age groups. The worry amongst the oldest officers is not unexpected, although it is of interest that worry does not appear to become relatively common until the age of 56 is reached. Between 51 and 55 years of age our evidence suggests there may be no more worry than amongst officers in their twenties, thirties and forties.

Our inquiries showed that there were six aspects of reorganisation which each worried more than 30% of the staff aged under 21. Similarly there were four aspects which each worried more than 30% of the staff aged 56 and over. But in the intermediate age groups none of the prospective changes worried as large a proportion of the staff as this.

The 'top ten' worries were broadly the same in each age group as in the sample as a whole. In other words the most extensive worries were about the convenience of the place of work, the prospect of working in a larger organisation and the influences on the satisfaction obtained from work which we discussed earlier. But there were differences of detail between the age groups. The major worries amongst the youngest officers were about working in a larger organisation (50% were worried about this), being given a job in the new authority (42%), their relations with officers to whom they would be responsible (35%), the convenience of their future place of work (31%), adaptation to new methods of work (31%) and adaptation to a new type of work (31%). By contrast the major worries amongst the officers aged 56 and over were status (46%), convenience of place of work (42%), the recognition of their work by others in the authority (42%), and working in a larger organisation (33%). Amongst the staff aged 21 to 35 the greatest cause of anxiety was the prospect of working in a larger organisation, about which 30% of the group were worried: in the 36 to 50 age group the most important factor was the convenience of the place of work, which worried 29% of the officers; and in the 51-55 age group sense of status, which worried 25% of those involved, ranked first.

#### THE EXTENT OF WORRY IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

We divided our sample of officers into four occupational groups—

### *The workload and reactions of staff*

those with no professional or technical qualifications; those with full technical qualifications: fully qualified engineers, surveyors, town planners etc: and officers who were partially qualified either technically or professionally. We found that there were only small variations between the groups in the extent of worry. Another similarity is that in all the groups the convenience of the place of work, the prospect of working in a larger organisation and the various intangible causes of worry, which we mentioned earlier, each ranked high as causes of concern. Amongst the officers with no professional or technical qualifications the major causes of concern were the convenience of their future place of work and the prospect of working in a larger organisation which each worried 33% of the group. The most common worry amongst the officers with full technical qualifications was the prospect of working in a larger organisation (27%). The number of officers in our sample with only partial qualifications was rather small but it is, nevertheless, of interest that the following each worried 32% of the group—the convenience of the place of work, working in a larger organisation, relations with officers to whom responsible, opportunity to develop personally in work, sense of achievement in work and being given a job in the new authority. Sense of status was the most important cause of worry amongst the fully qualified staff (28%) but the importance of this should not be exaggerated since 24% of the officers with no professional or technical qualifications were worried about status, as were 23% of those with full technical qualifications and 20% of those with partial qualifications.

#### EXPERIENCE IN THE NEW AUTHORITY

As we have seen a proportion of the staff are likely to be worried about various aspects of reorganisation. But others are likely to be looking forward to it because they expect to receive a higher salary, to be doing more varied work, to obtain a greater sense of achievement from their work, to have agreeable working relations with their colleagues, or for a number of other reasons. We must now consider how far these expectations were fulfilled. Did officers find that in the event they gained or lost in each of these respects?

If we consider the four aspects mentioned above (see Table 2) we find that on balance staff gained as far as salary grading was concerned: 4% said they had lost but 42% had gained. But in respect of each of the other three impending changes officers had apparently suffered a net loss: 10% said they had gained in so far as the nature of the work was concerned but 26% said they had lost: 22% said they obtained a greater sense of achievement from their work but 41% felt they were worse off in this respect: 15% thought they had more agreeable working relationships with their colleagues but 23% said there had been a deterioration.



### *Setting up the new authorities*

In our questionnaire we mentioned 16 aspects of working in the new authority. As far as 14 aspects were concerned, whilst some staff thought they had gained, an even greater number thought they had lost. For example one of the most extensive gains was in terms of status, but although 31% thought they had gained 38% thought they had lost. Similarly 24% thought they had gained in so far as their opportunities for independent thought and action were concerned but 38% said they had lost. Only 14% thought they had gained in terms of the recognition and appreciation of their work by others in the authority whilst 41% said they had lost.

There was one aspect where the number of officers who thought they had lost and the number who thought they had gained was almost exactly equal: 27% said they had gained, and 26% said they had lost, as far as their authority and influence over others was concerned.

Only in respect of salary grading did the gain, as we mentioned above, exceed the loss.

Half or more of the officers in the sample thought that they had neither gained nor lost as far as 7 of the 16 specified aspects of reorganisation were concerned. But this, in itself, is an indication of the far reaching changes, perhaps of a permanent nature, which a reorganisation entails for members of staff. If we exclude hours of work and fringe benefits 35% or more of the staff felt they had either gained or lost in respect of each of the other 14 specified aspects of reorganisation.

As an indication of the drastic nature of the changes 65% believed their opportunities for independent thought and action had changed, a similar proportion thought that the sense of achievement which they gained from their work had changed and 72% said there had been a change in their status. When such far reaching changes are at stake it is clearly advisable, since staff morale is of such great importance, to make the transition as agreeable an experience as possible for the staff. We suggest certain ways in which this might be achieved at the end of this chapter.

#### **OFFICERS' ATTITUDES TO THEIR ACTUAL WORK**

Although some officers felt they had gained as far as their precise type of work was concerned an even greater number thought they had lost. On balance as Table 2 shows there was a net loss in respect of 'sense of achievement in work' and 'type of work'. The number of staff who found their work after reorganisation less satisfying than their usual type of work before the appointed day (i.e. excluding any abnormal work due to reorganisation) also exceeded the number who found their work more satisfying (41% of the sample as compared with 33%). (See Table 3.)

*The workload and reactions of staff*

*Table 2. Officers' experience of aspects of reorganisation: in rank order according to the proportion of officers in the sample who believed they had gained as a result of reorganisation.*

(Based on replies to 242 questionnaires.)

	<i>Officers who said they had gained</i>	<i>Officers who said they had lost</i>	<i>Officers who said they had neither lost nor gained</i>
	%	%	%
Salary grading	42	4	50
Sense of status in work	31	38	28
Authority or influence over others in your work	27	26	42
Opportunity for independent thought and action	24	38	36
Sense of achievement in work	22	41	34
Promotion prospects	22	24	48
Relations with officers to whom responsible	17	32	48
Opportunity to develop personally in your work as you would like	17	45	33
Agreeable working relations with colleagues	15	23	60
Recognition and apprecia- tion of your work by others in the authority	14	41	43
Travelling expenses	13	23	55
Contact with elected members	11	24	49
Type of work	10	26	56
Convenience of place of work	9	34	53
Fringe benefits	8	17	62
New hours of work	8	13	77

Our work suggests some of the reasons for this net decline in satisfaction and sense of achievement. The first point of interest is that the decline in satisfaction was greatest in the smaller authorities. Some officers from the 'core' authorities said their work was less satisfying (27%) but an even greater number said it was more satisfying (37%). But over 60% of the officers from

### *Setting up the new authorities*

the smaller authorities said their work was less satisfying whilst only 26% said it was more satisfying.

*Table 3. Officers' reactions to their work after reorganisation: how it compared with their normal type of work before the appointed day*

	<i>Whole sample</i>	<i>'Core' authorities</i>	<i>Smaller authorities</i>
Number in sample	242	150	92
	%	%	%
More satisfying	33	37	26
Less satisfying	41	27	63
More specialised	55	43	73
Less specialised	10	7	14
More scope for initiative	37	44	26
Less scope for initiative	38	24	60
More demanding	61	66	52
Less demanding	14	8	23
More varied	35	39	29
Less varied	33	17	60

The second feature is that the degree of specialisation had obviously increased on a wide scale: 55% of the sample said their work was more specialised as compared with only 10% who found it less specialised. As is to be expected about three quarters of the staff from smaller authorities found their work to be more specialised but over 40% of the staff from 'core' authorities had also had this experience. This greater specialisation may well have contributed to the loss of satisfaction in both types of authority. But it is worth noting that although 43% of the officers from 'core' authorities said their work had become more specialised, only 27% said it had become less satisfying. We must therefore examine how far specialisation may be increased without sacrificing the satisfaction and sense of achievement which officers gain from their work.

Many officers from the smaller authorities thought they had less opportunity for initiative after the appointed day (60%) whereas only 26% thought they had more opportunities of this kind. Conversely, in the 'core' authorities nearly half the officers thought they had more opportunity for initiative and only a quarter thought their opportunities were less. However, there was evidently on the whole no shortage of work of a demanding nature! Over half the officers from both the 'core' and smaller authorities said their work after reorganisation was more demanding than that before. Nevertheless, the morale of the minority of staff



### *The workload and reactions of staff*

from smaller authorities who found their work less demanding (23%) may well have been at a low level.

Our evidence highlights again (see p. 96) the drastic nature of the changes imposed on staff by reorganisation. As far as satisfaction from work is concerned, three quarters of the sample had experienced a change for better or for worse, and similar proportions experienced a change in their 'scope for initiative' and in the 'demanding' nature of their work: two thirds said their work was more, or less, specialised as compared with their normal type of work in the pre-reorganisation period.

#### CHIEF OFFICERS AND OTHER HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

We have been discussing the impact of reorganisation on the general body of staff, but for chief officers or heads of department reorganisation is often fraught with particular anxiety. In certain cases they may be reasonably confident that their experience, position and record will lead to their appointment to the headship of a new department: in other instances it will be clear that their chances of appointment are negligible. For other chief officers the future will be very uncertain. They may fear that personal loyalties, political considerations or a process of 'horse trading' will influence an appointment or that an outsider will be brought in to fill a position.

Some chief officers will choose to retire, or to move to other work, when reorganisation is implemented. A relatively small number may, as in London<sup>1</sup>, be declared redundant. If ex-chief officers have the alternative of redundancy or of a supernumerary post many will prefer the latter.

Some ex-chief officers involved in previous reorganisations were very dissatisfied with the way they had been fitted into the permanent establishments. A number had impressive titles but only nominal duties: others felt their responsibilities were of a limited and essentially routine nature. A number were despondent about their loss of status. Difficulties have arisen, however, as a result of ex-chief officers being given posts which proved, in the opinion of their chiefs, to be too demanding for them. Some of the officers themselves felt that the work was too onerous because of its scale, complexity, technicality or for other reasons. This had inevitably created a very difficult situation in that the officers were often under considerable strain and, at the same time, the heads of their departments, whilst dissatisfied with their work, were uncertain how to deal with the situation. To some extent these problems are inevitable. They can occur with any appointments. In several in-

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 6, p. 63.

stances the situation was resolved by transferring the officer concerned to a type of work for which he was more suited. But many of these problems could have been avoided if there had been discussions with these officers well before the appointed day to discover their experience and interests and to explain the precise duties involved in the various posts available.

But the difficulties of fitting ex-chief officers and heads of department into the new establishments should not be exaggerated. Previous experience suggests that many will prove to be invaluable deputies or heads of large sections. Some of the ex-chief officers we interviewed were playing an important and active part in the new authorities and believed they had personally benefited from reorganisation. Their authorities were, apparently, equally satisfied with the situation, several of the officers having been promoted during the period following reorganisation.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

##### **(a) Staff policy before the appointed day**

- (i) A substantial proportion of the staff in the constituent authorities are likely to be looking forward to many of the changes which are expected to ensue as a result of reorganisation. It seems to us that a prime objective of those responsible, at both central and local level, for the implementation of the reorganisation should be to ensure that, as far as it is possible and compatible with efficiency, these favourable expectations are maintained. Moreover, these favourable expectations may well have implications for the mechanics of actually bringing the new authority into existence. They mean, for example, that requests for assistance with the work of reorganisation will often meet with a willing response.
- (ii) However, a substantial body of officers will probably be worried by the prospective changes. Council members and senior officers would be well advised to seek ways to alleviate this worry as far as possible because of its harmful effect on morale and motivation and, consequently, on the efficiency of local government. This is quite apart from the personal unhappiness involved. Anyone in any way responsible for the implementation of reorganisation should be aware of this undercurrent of worry and concern.
- (ii) It should be recognised that a minority of officers in all the constituent authorities (including the largest one in an amalgamation), in all age groups, and at all levels in the hierarchy, is likely to be worried. However worry is likely to be most

### *The workload and reactions of staff*

prevalent amongst certain groups of officers and we suggest that particular attention should be paid to these points of special danger—that is to the smaller (i.e. not the 'core') authorities, to the youngest officers below 21 years of age and to the oldest officers over 55 years of age. The concerns of these officers should be given special attention.

- (iv) Staff are likely to be worried about many aspects of reorganisation. But there are points of special danger here also. The matters which are likely to cause the most extensive worries are the future location of departments and the rôle which officers expect to have in the new organisation—whether they will just be a unit in an impersonal organisation, whether their work will be recognised by other people in the authority, what their status will be, and whether their work will give them a sense of achievement. Some officers will be worried as to whether they will be offered a job in the new authority, what salary they will receive, and whether they will have good promotion prospects, but worries about the more intangible aspects which we mentioned above are likely to be equally, if not more, important. Participation of officers from all the constituent authorities involved in the creation of the new authority would encourage officers to identify with the new authority and would dispel some of their fears about it. The creation of inter-authority working groups would be helpful in this respect, as well as in avoiding excessive work loads on the staff of the 'core' authorities. These groups would also provide an opportunity for staff to meet their future chief officers and section heads which would be valuable in dispelling some of the worries about new 'bosses'.
- (v) Some worries are likely to be completely unnecessary. For example, many young officers may well be worried about being given a job in the new authority, in spite of there being considerable shortages of staff, particularly in these age ranges. Better communication should largely remove this type of problem.
- (vi) As already indicated in Chapter 6 we suggest that there should be effective consultation with officers about the precise nature of their work after the appointed day. Some of the staff we interviewed had been given an opportunity to discuss their future work, and offered a certain amount of choice about it, but others were fitted into the establishment in what they felt was an autocratic manner. The latter were worried because they did not know what type of work they would be called upon to do after the appointed day, whether it would be congenial, and



### *Setting up the new authorities*

whether they would be capable of doing it efficiently. Naturally it will not always be possible to allocate officers to the type of work they prefer and for which they appear to be suited. But there is everything to be gained from eliciting officers' preferences and abiding by them as far as possible.

- (vii) A common worry, particularly amongst the youngest officers and those, at the other extreme, over 55 years of age, concerned the problem of having to adapt to a new type or method of work. Some older officers had no fear of change but it may be possible to reassure those who are, for example, worried about the possibility of being asked to deal with some highly technical problem that they will not be asked to do anything too demanding. It might well reassure younger officers if they knew that there would be some arrangements, although perhaps of a rudimentary nature, to train them for their new jobs.
- (viii) The convenience of the place of work was the most important cause of worry in the sample as a whole and it ranked very high as a cause of concern in every age group and in every constituent authority. It clearly involved far more than the question of travelling expenses. The additional distances which officers have to travel as a result of the forthcoming reorganisation will clearly be considerable in some cases. No doubt some work will not, at least for a time, be centralised in one place. There is a strong case where possible for offering some staff the option of staying in the same place, if this can be done by a departmental transfer or a transfer to an authority at a different level. We have mentioned the stress laid on the physical conditions of work in Chapter 6. Help with the acquisition of new housing will no doubt be necessary in certain cases. Since some officers will continue to travel considerable distances there is a strong case for providing adequate lunch and 'common room' facilities. Indeed an attractive staff club might well be desirable. These recommendations involve expenditure but it would not be extravagant in comparison with practice outside local government and the costs would be offset, at least partially, by the consequently improved morale and attitudes.
- (ix) It is in our opinion of vital importance that there should be effective consultation with the staff of all the constituent authorities. We discuss how this may best be achieved in the following chapter.

#### **(b) Staff policy after the appointed day**

- (i) Council members, key officers, departmental and section heads

### *The workload and reactions of staff*

should keep to the fore the importance of personal relationships and the need to ensure that work is as meaningful and interesting as possible.

- (ii) A high level of delegation within departments is desirable not only in the interests of management efficiency in the new authority but also to provide officers with scope for initiative and a sense of responsibility. It is an aspect of 'job enrichment' of especial importance where in other ways the scope of officers' work is being reduced and where adaptive attitudes are so necessary. Where officers transfer to authorities of increased size the problem of adjusting to the much greater degree of delegation that is necessary for efficiency may present difficulties. The need for delegation should therefore be additionally stressed in these circumstances.
- (iii) As far as possible work should be structured so as to maintain interest in spite of greater specialisation.
- (iv) Staff transferring from small to large authorities should be given special help in adaptation and assured that their chances in their work will be equal with those of the staff from larger authorities who have comparable experience and qualifications.

## 8 Staff Consultation

CONSULTATION with staff during the joint committee and shadow council stages is clearly of vital importance. Our investigation shows that many staff worry about the more obvious aspects of reorganisation—whether they might be redundant, what salary they will receive in the new authority, the kind of work they will be expected to do and, of particular importance, where they will be working. But staff worry equally, if not more, about their rôle in the new organisation and the sense of personal fulfilment they will obtain from their new job—whether they will be just faceless units in a large organisation, what their status will be, what sense of achievement they will gain from their work, and so on.

To some extent these fears can be removed, or at least reduced, if staff are kept informed about the progress of the reorganisation. But it is also important that officers should develop a sense of identity with the new authority and this can only happen if they feel they are participating to some degree in its creation. As we have already mentioned, the dissemination of work throughout all the constituent authorities will contribute towards this sense of participation, as well as reducing work loads for officers who would otherwise be under considerable pressure and strain. In addition, staff consultation should, as far as possible, be a two way process; experience has shown that staff are more understanding and co-operative when they not only receive information about the progress of the reorganisation but also have opportunities to explain their own ideas and worries. It will be valuable if staff have an opportunity to meet their new senior officers (as well as their new colleagues) and to discuss with them the problems of reorganisation, particularly those relevant to staff interests.

Our evidence shows that staff would greatly welcome more information and more opportunities for discussion. We asked officers whether they would like to propose any ways in which the management of reorganisation could be improved. Out of the 163 suggestions put forward 67 were concerned with the need for better



### *Staff consultation*

communications, 3 with the need for more reassurance to staff and 4 with the need to prevent the deterioration of staff morale. There were also criticisms of the ways in which appointments were made, of attitude to the staff of smaller authorities, accommodation and the impersonality of a large authority. More consultation might well have helped all those involved to a better understanding of the situation.

By this we do not imply that all ill-feeling and worry can be removed by greater communication and consultation. It would be extremely naive to do so. But, on the other hand, a dearth of information and a feeling of exclusion, rather than participation, causes worry and bitterness which can persist for many years after vesting day. The authorities themselves, as well as staff, will benefit from the maintenance of staff morale. If morale suffers there is a tendency for the turnover of staff to be abnormally high and for the standards of work amongst the remaining officers to decline.

Some matters of staff interest, such as compensation provisions and disturbance allowances, are of course decided on a national basis. But at a local level the joint committees and new councils will be taking many decisions of importance to their staff. It will be valuable if staff are kept informed of these decisions and, where appropriate, given an opportunity to state their point of view. For example, each authority will have to decide how it intends to interpret the advice received from such bodies as the Department of the Environment, the National Joint Council, the Staff Commission and the Provincial Council. The staff will also wish to be kept informed about, and to have an opportunity to discuss, specific issues arising within each amalgamation.

It is advisable to develop some effective means of consultation and communication with staff (including manual workers) at an early stage in the reorganisation process, possibly even before the joint committee stage. Staff became unsettled and worried as soon as reorganisation is mooted. It will be helpful if the constituent authorities ensure that their staffs are kept informed of any proposals and developments so that they are not dependent on rumour and the press for information. When the joint committees are formed the consultative arrangements can be put on a more formal, systematic basis. Early attention to the means by which staff consultation is to be achieved is particularly important since it will help to ensure that relationships with staff start off on a 'good footing'. Moreover, at a later stage in the reorganisation process, members and senior officers are likely to become so embroiled in the many problems which have to be settled as a matter of urgency that they will not have time to give adequate thought

### *Setting up the new authorities*

to staff consultation. If consultative arrangements are settled early it will reassure staff that during the reorganisation process there will be official channels through which, if informal contacts prove unsatisfactory, they can both obtain information and state their own point of view.

The staff side will probably wish to raise a variety of topics at a very early stage in the reorganisation process. Compensation provisions, superannuation arrangements, the possibility of limiting the recruitment of staff during the interim period and the means by which the staff are to be kept informed about establishments and assimilation proposals are subjects which have been discussed at an early stage in the past. Topics which have been raised in previous reorganisations at a somewhat later stage include office accommodation, separation allowances, car allowances, travelling expenses, and car parking arrangements. The members and senior officers responsible for implementing the reorganisation may, themselves, find staff consultation at an early stage of considerable value. It gives them an opportunity to explain their objectives and the constraints which limit the extent to which they can accede to the wishes of staff. It is helpful if staff appreciate the complexity of the problems, how short will be the time in which they have to be solved and the scarcity of finance and manpower.

#### THE MACHINERY FOR STAFF CONSULTATION

In discussing staff consultation one tends to think in terms of a consultative committee composed of representatives of the employers' side and of the staff side. But no single piece of machinery can solve the problem. If all staff are to receive the information they need and to feel involved in the creation of the new authority it is necessary to utilise several avenues of communication.

##### **(a) Staff consultative committees**

It is desirable that a committee representing all the constituent authorities on one side, and all their non-manual staffs on the other should be established during the joint committee stage in each of the new authorities, to be followed by the establishment of a permanent committee when the new council has been elected. In one of the amalgamations which we studied, for example, a staff consultative committee which was established nearly two years before vesting day met on two occasions before the election of the shadow council. Subsequently, the new council appointed its own staff consultative committee which had four meetings before the appointed day. Experience suggests that consultative

### *Staff consultation*

committees for manual workers would also be valuable. Such a committee, composed of 12 representatives of the council and 12 of the works staff, was established in one of the amalgamations since it was found that although a good deal of time had been spent in negotiations with the trade unions, "in the initial stages the contact had been at a fairly high level and the discussions were taking place with Regional and Area Secretaries".<sup>1</sup> The Director of Technical Services believed this committee had been a success and "through many regular meetings the many problems affecting the staff (i.e. including manual workers) were resolved amicably".<sup>2</sup>

If non-manual staff feel that meetings of consultative committees are unduly delayed, or infrequent, they become anxious and annoyed. In one of the amalgamations certain members of the establishments sub-committee of the joint committee held a meeting with NALGO representatives just over a year before vesting day when there was a discussion of departmental establishments, the location of departments, key appointments and the assimilation of staff. But the new council did not establish a staff consultative committee until just over two months before the appointed day. Following strong protests from the staff it was agreed that after the appointed day there should be regular meetings. Another authority believed the best policy was to delay consultation with the staff until it was sure it had "got the establishments right". But this led to so much worry, fanned by press leaks about the radical proposals which it was alleged were due to be put forward, that the employers' secretary of the Provincial Council eventually exerted strong pressure on the authority to consult with the staff as a matter of urgency. Just over two weeks later a staff consultative committee met for the first time.

It is, of course, desirable that the various branches of NALGO involved in an amalgamation should establish a single committee to represent their interests. Before the election of the shadow council, a staff consultative committee is normally composed of certain councillors from the authorities' joint committee and of representatives of the staff side who are usually appointed by the committee representing the appropriate branches of NALGO. In the past it has been customary for the staff side to be assisted

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<sup>1</sup> Brooks, W. J. H., *The reorganisation of labour forces for a new county borough*. Paper to the Institute of Works and Highways Superintendents Conference, September 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Hawkins, M. R., *Torbay County Borough: an exercise in local government reorganisation*. Paper to Institute of Municipal Engineers Conference, Torquay 1970.



### *Setting up the new authorities*

by officers of the headquarters or district staff of NALGO. Certain senior officers assist the employers' side.

The objects and functions of a consultative committee may be defined in general terms. One authority defined them as 'to provide a means of consultation between the employers and representatives of the staff on reorganisation as it affects the staffs, and in particular on matters such as the reallocation of employees to other authorities, the revision of establishments, and on any questions of principle which may arise in the filling of posts'. We have already mentioned some of the subjects which have been raised in consultative committees for non-manual staff in the past. Whether detailed proposals about establishments and assimilation schemes should be referred to these committees is a matter for discretion. One authority did this, but the others preferred to put their proposals directly to the joint committee of the relevant branches of NALGO. Queries about the general structure of the establishments and about individual grades or appointments were then raised occasionally in the consultative committees.

The topics considered in the past by consultative committees during the joint committee period have been mainly connected with ways in which the interests of existing members of staff might be protected. Underlying much of this discussion there was, of course, the fear of redundancy which led both the officers and the Provincial Councils to press for restrictions on recruitment from outside the area. Accordingly, the procedures to be followed in connection with any vacancies which occurred in the constituent authorities before the appointed day, the possibility of postponing retirements, the sharing of staff and the extent to which county staff would be affected by reorganisation were all considered. We would, however, suggest that positive use should be made of the committees during the joint committee period. Although the joint committees cannot in any way commit the new councils, their members can, as we mentioned earlier, take the opportunity to explain the problems of reorganisation and to keep the staff informed of developments.

After the election of the new council attention in staff consultative committees tends to turn to questions relating to the creation of the new authority—the extent to which posts in the new establishment should be advertised on a national basis, hours of work, methods of paying staff salaries and other topics which we mentioned earlier (page 104).

Topics considered in the joint consultative committee for manual workers established in one authority ranged from the proposed new organisations for the direct labour work forces to leave of

absence for attendance at funerals. Other subjects which were discussed included working hours, messing facilities, travelling allowances, parking facilities, wage packets, meal allowances, sick schemes, incentive bonus schemes and the reorganisation of refuse rounds<sup>1</sup>.

In the authorities which we studied NALGO called meetings periodically to inform its members about developments but few of the people we interviewed, who ranged from chief officers to clerical staff, had attended these meetings. Consequently in some authorities officers were generally unaware of the nature of the discussions. In one authority we were told that there had been a 'break-down of communication between staff and NALGO'.

Since some staff do not belong to any association, others prefer to join a body other than NALGO, and even the members of NALGO may not be informed of developments, it will be helpful if the local authorities themselves ensure that the general body of officers are kept informed of proceedings in the staff consultative committee. Perhaps the most convenient method will be to describe these proceedings in the amalgamation bulletins which we discuss below. It will be advantageous to publish, in a similar way, the proceedings of any parallel consultative committee for manual workers. Amalgamation bulletins were issued to the manual workers in one of the amalgamations and the experiment was regarded as a success.

**(b) Meetings of members and senior officers with the general body of staff**

Comparatively few such meetings were arranged in the authorities which we studied. Officers from some of the smaller authorities were kept informed of developments by their departmental heads, but others were not. Since officers in the larger authorities were primarily responsible for the implementation of the reorganisations the general body of staff in these authorities did not feel 'out on a limb' to quite the same extent, but nevertheless they were largely dependent on 'the grapevine' for information.

Such meetings as were arranged were obviously well worthwhile in that they clearly made a big impact on the staff. In one of the amalgamations, for example, a mass meeting which all officers were invited to attend was arranged jointly by the new council and NALGO about four months before the appointed day.

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<sup>1</sup> Brooks, W. J. H., *The reorganisation of labour forces for a new county borough*, Paper to the Institute of Works and Highways Superintendents Conference September 1969.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

The chairman of the council was there to answer questions and it was clear from our interviews that the meeting gave the individual members of staff a sense of participation and helped to convince them that staff interests were receiving adequate attention. Some departmental heads visited the staff in the constituent authorities and there was an exchange of ideas which was appreciated by many officers, although some staff did comment cynically during our interviews that they did not believe any notice would be taken of their views! However, the extent to which information was disseminated and views exchanged in this way was very patchy. Some chief officers in the constituent authorities, and also chief officers appointed by the new authorities, completely omitted to keep their staff informed of developments, to find out whether they had any serious anxieties or grievances, or to give them any sense of participation in the new authority. This apparently happened because of pressure of other work, a failure to appreciate the importance of staff consultation and communication or, in the case of some departmental heads in the smaller authorities, because they themselves were in ignorance of developments and were preoccupied by worries about their own future.

A comprehensive, systematic scheme of regular meetings within each group of authorities would therefore seem advisable. It is unsatisfactory to rely on the independent initiative of departmental heads. It may be possible to arrange for all staff to be present at these meetings but if it is necessary to confine the meetings to certain staff representatives then it would be advisable to inform other staff of the proceedings by way of notice boards or circulated summaries. If the departmental meetings take place shortly after the meetings of the main consultative committee then it will be possible to discuss the implications of the proceedings in that committee, as well as strictly departmental matters.

#### **(c) Amalgamation Bulletins**

Two of the authorities which we visited distributed leaflets containing information about the reorganisation to their employees. We have already mentioned the Amalgamation Bulletins which were distributed to the manual workers in one amalgamation. In one of the extensions a leaflet containing messages from the mayor, the chairman of the establishment committee, and the town clerk was given to each member of the new authority's staff three months before the appointed day. The leaflet also described in plain language, but in some detail, the legal provisions relating to the transfer of staff as well as the procedure the authority was following in relation to both the appointment of staff and the arrangements about office accommodation. Subsequently,



### *Staff consultation*

leaflets were distributed at monthly intervals and their publication is now permanent policy.

#### **(d) Informal contacts**

Whatever form is taken by the formal machinery of consultation, the quality of the relationships between the staff and the authority will depend to a large extent on the nature of the informal relationships between the representatives of the staff on one side and the senior officers responsible for the management of the reorganisation on the other.

We found that in those authorities where the clerk had realised the importance of these informal contacts and had been given a reasonably free hand by the members to provide information about the general progress of the reorganisation, to give suitable reassurances about the protection of staff interests, and to deal with individual problems as they arose, the transfer of staff had proceeded comparatively smoothly. In one of the extensions, for example, the clerk of the county borough invited the secretary of the NALGO joint committee to attend the chief officers' meetings devoted to the discussion of accommodation problems. This was found to be very helpful. If informal contacts of this kind lead to trust and understanding there will be far less need to use the formal consultative machinery than if the attitude throughout the constituent authorities is one of distrust and suspicion.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

- (a) It is advisable to develop effective methods of consultation with both manual and non-manual staff at an early stage in the reorganisation process. The objectives of this machinery are five-fold. The first objective is to reassure staff that their interests are not being overlooked. The second is to find out what, if anything, is causing particular concern and worry to the staff. A third objective is to ensure that the staff are provided with hard facts about the progress of the reorganisation. Otherwise, staff depend on press reports and on acquaintances who may, or may not, be 'in the know': information becomes distorted and rumours are responsible for unnecessary disquiet and worry. The fourth objective of staff consultation is to help the staff to understand the problems which are faced by the members and senior officers primarily responsible for the management of the reorganisation. Suitable channels of communication will enable the leading members and officers to explain the many problems with which they are having to deal and the constraints of time, money,

### *Setting up the new authorities*

and manpower within which they must operate. This will help staff to understand why decisions are sometimes delayed and why it is sometimes impossible to accede to their requests. The fifth, and perhaps the most important, objective is to provide staff with a sense of participation in the creation of the new authority, so that they identify with it instead of feeling that it is a remote, alien, impersonal organisation.

- (b) If staff consultation is to achieve these objectives, two general principles should be observed when deciding how consultation is to be organised. In the first place, the consultation should be a two-way process: in other words there should be an exchange of information and ideas rather than a communication of decisions from the management side and a statement of attitudes and demands from the employees' side. Secondly, all the individual officers in an organisation should as far as possible participate in some measure in this consultation. Only a few representatives can sit on a staff consultative committee but we will consider other ways whereby the ordinary individual officer can feel he is involved.
- (c) Constituent authorities may not have found it necessary to pay much attention to staff consultation. Under normal circumstances, when there are comparatively few changes, it may have been quite satisfactory, particularly in smaller authorities, to rely on informal contacts. But when a period of rapid change is in prospect the situation is quite different. Staff will be very concerned and will want both adequate information and an opportunity to express their own anxieties and points of view. Before the joint committees are established the constituent authorities would be well advised to consider whether any improvements are necessary in their arrangements for communication with their own staff. In a small authority it may, of course, simply be necessary to ensure that there are regular discussions with staff on a quite informal basis.
- (d) When the joint committees are established there will be a need for the development of several channels of staff consultation. This aspect of the reorganisation is sufficiently important to warrant some considerable attention from the leading council members and officers. But later, when methods of staff consultation have been agreed, the leading figures are likely to be inundated with other problems. Consequently, it is desirable that a particular member (such as the chairman of the establishment committee) and a specific officer (such as the establishment officer) should have the immediate re-

### *Staff consultation*

sponsibility of ensuring that the system is working satisfactorily. It may be thought advisable to appoint an officer with a special responsibility to ensure that staff are kept adequately informed and thereby reduce the burden of the responsibility on other officers.

- (e) Staff consultation has two main aspects which are complementary to each other. First, there are the informal contacts between staff representatives and persons with special managerial responsibilities, such as the clerk or chief executive. Secondly, there is the formal staff consultative machinery. Many problems can best be handled informally. But there are likely to be some issues which cannot be resolved in this way. Moreover, the purpose of consultation is not simply to reach agreement with the representatives of the staff side, but to communicate with all members of the staff and to give them opportunities to communicate with the management. Consequently, some formal machinery of consultation, including provision for regular meetings, is necessary. Furthermore, the mere existence of this machinery reassures the staff that if the council members or chief officers fail to communicate informally with them because of pressure of work, or some other reason, there will be some other channel whereby they can try to secure information and make known their views.
- (f) A staff consultative committee representing all the constituent authorities and all their staffs will be needed at an early stage in the reorganisation process, and certainly shortly after the formation of the joint committee. When the new council has been elected it, too, will need to act speedily in establishing a consultative committee. In our opinion it is inadvisable to delay the formation of such a committee, as did some authorities, until decisions have been reached about establishments and appointments in the new authority. Meetings of a staff consultative committee at an early stage in the reorganisation process will increase mutual understanding if there are general discussions of problems and attitudes. During both the joint committee and shadow council periods the consultative committee should not, in our view, be used simply to discuss the aspects of reorganisation in which staff have a specific and particular interest. It should also be a forum in which the more general aspects of reorganisation problems and proposals can be explained to staff so that they know how the reorganisation is proceeding and appreciate that there are unavoidable difficulties. In our opinion the committee should meet at prescribed intervals and the chairman should be authorised to call addi-



### *Setting up the new authorities*

tional meetings. Steps should be taken to ensure that the general body of staff is aware of proceedings in the consultative committee. We mention ways in which this might be done in recommendation (h) below.

- (g) Other meetings are desirable to ensure that as many officers as possible have a chance to air their anxieties and to feel involved in the emergence of the new authority. As we have seen (page 110) a mass meeting of all the staff due to be transferred to the new authority may well be worthwhile. On a smaller scale regular meetings within the departments of the constituent authorities will ensure that staff have a chance to take part in discussions and to feel involved. It might be valuable if the staffs from different constituent authorities who are due to be combined in one department can meet together some time before the appointed day under the chairmanship of their new chief officer. Experience shows that it is desirable to have an agreed system of regular meetings. If it is left to individual initiative there is liable to be a complete failure on the part of some heads of departments to communicate with their staffs because they themselves lack information, do not see the need for staff consultation or are so overworked that this aspect of their responsibilities is overlooked.
- (h) Bulletins distributed to each individual officer and manual worker are an effective means of ensuring that all staff receive regular, accurate information about the reorganisation. Two authorities have distributed them in previous reorganisations and have been well satisfied with the results. At an early stage in the reorganisation process, information can be given about the legal provisions relating to staff, about the work of the joint committee and about the proceedings in any staff consultative machinery which has been established. At a later date, information can be given about the work of the new council, the procedures to be followed in relation to establishments, decisions about accommodation, hours of work and so on.

At first sight, these suggested methods of staff consultation may appear to be excessively time consuming. But the number of meetings with staff need not be very large and the preparation of the bulletins would be a relatively simple matter. In comparison with the time devoted to other meetings and to the preparation of other reports, the amount of effort would be negligible.

## 9 Accommodation and Communications

WE HAVE already mentioned the responsibilities of the joint committee and the new councils with regard to accommodation (Chapters 2 and 4). The way in which the departments of a local authority are accommodated has an important influence on their work and efficiency. It promotes or hinders ease of communication within the department, within the authority as a whole and between the department and the public. The quality of the accommodation and its position has an impact on staff satisfaction. We found that location of workplace was one of the two matters of most concern to staff in advance of reorganisation and one likely to precipitate resignations (See Chapter 7).

Wherever authorities merge, extensive reallocation of accommodation becomes inevitable. The new departments are generally larger in size than any of their predecessors and to bring one department or only the main sections of a department together in one building will mean ousting another service from their rooms and cause a series of consequential moves. Buildings are often scattered, even within existing authorities. None of the buildings owned by some of the smaller authorities may be large enough or suitable to house the main part of a new department. The fragmentation of the administration cannot be avoided. The challenge is to plan the best use of the very imperfect resources available and to make the best provisions for additional accommodation where this is needed.

We mentioned in Chapter 2 that in some cases in the past it was felt in retrospect that too much attention had been given to plans for an ideal centre which it had never, in practice, been possible to build and too little time to the careful design of plans to meet the immediate challenge. That this is not an exceptional failing is confirmed by London experience. A town clerk of a London Borough has commented that it is "best to assume that the possibility of purpose-built centres is at least a generation away".

Debate often centres on the subject of centralisation versus decentralisation, and there is a tendency for one or other of these

### *Setting up the new authorities*

concepts to be stressed according to whether administrative efficiency and economies of scale or the convenience of the public is emphasised. This can obscure the complexity of the issues involved. In an extensive area certain functions within the same department will be more economically centralised and others more economically decentralised.

Decentralisation has sometimes not been popular with the public in the form it has taken: the area office has not proved satisfactory because of its limited function and the inadequacy of the information and service it is able to give. The issues cannot be separated from the form of organisational structure.

It may be helpful to state some of the principles which have been set out for accommodation planning in the past cases of reorganisation. They obviously tend to conflict with each other.

- (a) Departments should be housed as complete units as far as practicable in order to facilitate integration, flexibility and control of work.
- (b) Departments and sections whose activities are closely linked should be placed as close to each other as practicable. For example, the technical services and in particular planning, engineering, architecture and works departments are jointly concerned in many projects and co-ordination is more costly and may be discouraged where their accommodation is dispersed. Sometimes the expression the 'central departments of the authority' is used for the main providers of services for other departments; the need for the clerk's and the treasurer's departments especially to be in close continuous contact as well as to be centrally placed is often taken as obvious. But the most economical arrangements for inter-departmental communication may not be obvious. This is one subject where research of the kind being undertaken by the Local Government Operational Research Unit<sup>1</sup> may be valuable, even for short-term arrangements. Two levels of activity can be distinguished: (i) policy planning and (ii) operational. Much stress has been laid upon the former area in recent years and it may be that the close contacts within the planning groups that it requires have new implications for accommodation planning. Should there be an 'executive suite' with policy planning units at the centre? Accommodation arrangements should be planned not just on the basis of existing habits of communication but also to encourage (or discourage) close communication. Studies have shown that the physical distance separating executives is re-

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<sup>1</sup> Groom, K. N., *Office Accommodation and Officer Communication*, *Local Government Studies*, 1, October 1971, p. 63.



### *Accommodation and communications*

lated to the 'psychological distance' between them. Placing people close together increases their tendency towards mutual dependence, which is sometimes a good thing and sometimes a bad thing.

- (c) Offices which members of the public require to visit should be sited where they can be reached with minimum cost, time and inconvenience. This is related to low travelling costs for the public, the grouping of facilities so that the public can be re-directed from official to official and office to office at the least cost to themselves and bringing the organisational level at which they can be given quick and reliable answers as close to them as practicable.
- (d) Committee rooms should be easily accessible to elected members and to the officers who are regularly involved in meetings.
- (e) Accommodation for officials involved in visiting members of the public and work sites etc. should be located so as to economise on their time and expenses.
- (f) Accommodation should not be damaging to staff morale because of inadequate space, inconvenience and dilapidation. (In some cases that came to our knowledge, the depressing condition and congestion of some accommodation figured prominently as a cause of grievance and irritation to staff in the very difficult early months of operation of the new authority.) Closely connected is the need to have accommodation of a sufficiently high standard to establish the authority's reputation as modern and efficient. Offices used by members of the public should be bright and cheerful.
- (g) The minimum number of moves should be necessary at the time of transition to save the heavy loss of time and inconvenience to officers and public involved. The expense of a removal is rarely costed fully, but when the loss of officers' time and consequential difficulties are taken into account it can be surprisingly heavy.
- (h) Expenditure on new buildings, rent of premises and adaptation costs should be as low as possible. This will require careful research and evaluation of alternative possibilities.  
Technical factors to be considered may include:
  - (i) land prices (in some circumstances the sale of properties to provide resources for the purchase of more convenient accommodation may be possible);
  - (ii) costs of erecting new buildings (if required quickly, of a prefabricated and demountable kind);
  - (iii) rents of available, conveniently sited residential or commercial properties;

### *Setting up the new authorities*

- (iv) availability of staff in different areas;
- (v) future planning considerations and transport facilities;
- (vi) technological forecasts, e.g. should the eventual possibility for remote operation of a central computer be taken into consideration?

### COMMUNICATIONS

Efficient telephone and internal mail systems are obviously necessary in themselves and can go some way towards alleviating the effects of dispersion of accommodation. They are also important to public relations.

Special provisions will usually have to be made in a new authority for a telephone system which facilitates internal communication and which provides for a heavier flow of telephone calls from outside than experienced in the constituent authorities. The disposition of departments will determine the pattern of lines required and the degree to which centralisation of the exchange is possible.

Authorities have found in the past that when the requirements have been defined they have resulted in a need for major work by the Post Office and this has taken more time than anticipated. For example, more than 12 months may be required for the installation of an automatic exchange. One chief officer said that there was no field where the requirements were so likely to be under-estimated, and he was sure that certainly more than two years were needed in preparation.

A basic survey of telephone lines within constituent authorities may prove surprisingly difficult. In one case in the past where an exceptionally early and thorough start was made on collecting information, odd numbers were still being located six months after the new authority came into being. Information for the Post Office telephone directory is normally required at least 9 months before its publication.

The need to prepare and train telephone operators for the new system and to keep them fully informed of officers' movements should be realised and planned for.

We do not discuss here the possibility of televisual communication and remote computer lines because these involve a degree of technical innovation which it will rarely be possible to digest at a time when reconstructed basic systems of a familiar kind may normally be expected to take up all officers' energies.

Good telecommunications have little value unless officers and public know where officers are situated and where they can obtain help on specific topics. There is a need for a comprehensive directory of staff

and services to be prepared in advance of the appointed day, with arrangements for regular revision.

SUGGESTIONS ON ACCOMMODATION AND COMMUNICATION PLANNING

- (a) Surveys should be authorised as soon as possible of all accommodation within the boundaries of each new authority. Lists might include details of the tenure, floor area, description and function of every parcel of local authority accommodation in the area. Regard must be had to the standards in the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act, 1963, but bare figures of floor area can prove misleading in practice since they make no allowance for waste space, storage (for which ample provision is likely to be required), reception, committee rooms, rest and recreational rooms, etc. It was reckoned in one authority that it was necessary to allow 200 sq. ft. per person for old office property but that 115 sq. ft. was satisfactory on average for new accommodation. A margin of reserve space may prove a great economy in the long run.
- (b) Meetings of officers from county and district authorities should be held as soon as the surveys have been carried out and the legal functions of the two levels of authority are known. These should identify all properties due under the terms of legislation for transfer from the old district level to the new county level or vice versa and to other local bodies such as the new health authorities. This activity overlaps and might well be carried out in conjunction with the task of listing properties for transfer which we discussed in Chapter 2. Doubtful cases may be listed for special consideration. It is to be hoped that mutual agreement will be possible in nearly every case. Failure to resolve these issues early may seriously delay decisions on the need for additional accommodation for the appointed day.
- (c) An inter-departmental working group might be set up early for accommodation planning and might be made responsible for the survey suggested above. A comparison should be made as early as possible of the estimated accommodation requirements based upon preliminary estimates of the staff required by the new authority (also necessary for an early assessment of the local staffing situation as described in Chapter 6) and the accommodation available. This may indicate an excess or deficiency in accommodation.

In the event of an excess, inquiries should be made as to whether the space will be needed by the district or county authority, as the case may be, or if not by local bodies responsible for other public services such as health and drainage, to



### *Setting up the new authorities*

find if the accommodation is needed for any other purpose. In the event of a major deficiency rapid action may be necessary to ensure that essential accommodation is made available and prepared before the appointed day.

There may be uncertainties which cannot be satisfactorily resolved until the departmental structure and establishments have been worked out and approved, and it seems necessary to maintain a large element of flexibility in the planning until that point. However, this need not prevent planning for the provision of additional accommodation at a central point wherever there is an irrefutable need for office space.

Many new authorities have in the past found it necessary to lease or acquire offices and other accommodation. Another expedient has been to acquire demountable buildings which could subsequently be used for educational or other purposes.

- (d) A central working group on accommodation will require reports on the needs of particular services. A most important consideration will be the pattern of decentralisation in extensive areas. It may be thought valuable for the chief officers responsible for each function to make preliminary studies of alternative possibilities and the associated costs. It is important however that the subject is ultimately reported on from an all-authority point of view and that any final pattern of decentralisation takes into consideration the need to associate services in area offices, the convenience of staff and the public and other principles we have listed above.
- (e) The advance studies on accommodation should be submitted to the clerk of the new authority when appointed so that, in consultation with the other newly appointed chief officers and heads of department, he can submit a report without delay to the appropriate committee and decisions can be made on the action necessary in the light of decisions on departmental structure and decentralisation.
- (f) The aim should be to have all accommodation for the new authority ready on the appointed day.
- (g) Furniture can either move with officers or be left behind with the accommodation. Since furniture has usually been acquired for the individual needs of each section and so much will have to be moved for special purposes, it may prove simplest to assume movement with sections as a general principle and make specific exceptions.

If much new furniture is necessary, an early decision on a standard range is helpful and simple and fast ordering procedures should be adopted. Delivery times should be ascertained

at an early date so that a deadline for orders can be made known. Storage facilities are important.

- (h) A survey should be made of existing telephone lines in the constituent authorities and an estimate of future needs undertaken in conjunction with the preliminary estimates of accommodation needs (see (a), (b) and (c) above). Arrangements should be made for major installations as soon as possible. Ideally at least 18 months should be available between re-designing the telephone system and the appointed day. This may not be feasible, but it is important to start discussions with the Post Office as soon as it is possible to start defining needs and to place orders for lines and exchanges as soon as decisions on accommodation make this possible.
- (i) Responsibility for telephone planning and negotiations with the Post Office should be placed on an officer associated with the accommodation studies. The appointment should be made, if possible, two years or so before the appointed day if it is apparent that the work will be complex. This officer will have to work closely with the new departments in working out their individual requirements.
- (j) Arrangements for telephone directory entries after the appointed day should be made in the previous summer or as the Post Office advise.
- (k) Telephone operators should be appointed well in advance of the appointed day and adequately trained in the new system and the layout of the administration.
- (l) An internal staff directory should be prepared before the appointed day and arrangements made for regular up-dating.
- (m) An officer who bore responsibility for telephone organisation in an amalgamation suggests that the operational date for the switchrooms for a new authority should be at least a month before the appointed day to ease the load of work then.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We are indebted especially in the recommendations on telephones to a report by Mr. R. W. Stickling who was made responsible for telephone communications for the new County Borough of Torbay in 1966.

## 10 A Note on Financial Planning and Estimates

FINANCIAL planning, like manpower and accommodation planning, has to be undertaken in the face of an acute lack of information about facts and policies. We have no evidence that long-term forecasts of capital expenditure by new authorities in the year before the appointed day have carried much value in past reorganisations. The situation is not propitious to comparative appraisal of capital proposals. The most that was generally achieved was collation of ongoing programmes and postponement of consideration of proposals where there was doubt about their necessity and a lack of urgency (see Chapter 2).

The immediate financial implications for capital and recurrent expenditure must however be worked out well in advance for incorporation in the first year's financial estimates, and the implications must be drawn for the first year's rate in the quarter before the appointed day. They must also contribute to *ad hoc* judgments on what capital developments proposed by constituent authorities for starting after the appointed day should be put in hand in the first twelve months.

We consider here some general points about the preparation of financial estimates, a topic closely interwoven with the problems of establishment planning and accommodation and of vital concern to all services. This has already been discussed along with other concerns of treasurers' departments in a small literature on financial management in reorganisation situations<sup>1</sup> and we make no attempt to duplicate or summarise the contents of these sources.

The first estimates must be prepared largely by the aggregation of projections of expenditure and revenue by constituent authorities,

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<sup>1</sup> Caddick, A.D., *Some 'Financial and Administrative Considerations' involved in the Transfer of Functions between Authorities*: lecture print No. 3, Session 1967-68, IMTA. Bowdell, W., *The Financial and Administrative Problems of Local Government Reorganisation*, Annual Conference, Bournemouth 1970, IMTA. South East Associates (IMTA), *Reorganisation: A Treasurer's Manual*, November 1970.



with adjustments wherever additional information is available to place them on a more accurate basis. Thus each constituent authority must prepare, as early as possible in its final year, forecasts of the costs of its services within the area of each new authority to which it will have to transfer functions.

Difficulties lie in the wide inconsistency between authorities in classification of expenditures. Expenditures are grouped in different ways under different heads from authority to authority, and such matters as apportionment rules for central expenses and 'on-costing' vary greatly. Aggregation of items on the basis of existing codification is therefore difficult and full of pitfalls. To provide a bridge of comparison between expenditures in the old authorities and the new, it is necessary to classify expenditures on the same basis. This process could be greatly assisted if constituent authorities prepared their estimates according to a standard classification in the year before amalgamation. Although the preparation of the main estimates in a new form might involve too much additional work and lead to problems over financial control without major changes in the form of accounts, etc., a second set of estimates could be drawn up in the final year along the lines of the classification it is proposed to adopt in the new authority. This would also prepare the way to the adoption of the new form of accounts.

An authority whose area is to be divided between new authorities will raise special difficulties. The apportionment of county expenditures between different areas is difficult, and errors in education costs in particular can seriously distort judgment on the new rate. In such cases work should be started as soon as possible on the separation of estimates for each new local authority area.

It is likely to be very helpful if the work could include a detailed and explicit analysis of the basis of the estimates, e.g. of the premises involved, staffs and the assumptions about prices. The figures that appear to have given more trouble than any others in the past are those for inter-authority adjustments for extra-district pupils. These and all figures relevant to assessment of central grants should be prepared with as much accuracy as possible in the year before re-organisation, with forecasts for the following year.

There is need for a meeting of finance officers in each area at the earliest possible date to agree on as much standardisation as possible. In so far as functions are to be transferred from borough and county district level to county level, or in the reverse direction, both levels should be involved, as should also the new health authorities. An officer might be appointed for each new authority whose duty would be to take responsibility for smoothing the way towards standardisation of accounts and estimate preparation. In a large authority there

### *Setting up the new authorities*

may be a need for a team of officers to liaise with groups of officers from service departments and help staff of the new service departments who carry responsibilities in connection with estimates to play their part smoothly and effectively.

It must nevertheless be accepted that a fully integrated set of realistic estimates is likely to be impossible for the first year. There must be allowance for contingencies. Central grant estimation is beset by more uncertainties than expenditure forecasting. Government policy on local authority finance is still unknown at the time of writing, as is also policy on financial adjustments between authorities. The estimation of liabilities can have little reality unless there is firm information on the detailed implications by, say, the New Year's Day of the year of reorganisation.

In some cases in the past the level of the new rate has become the subject of sharp political controversy. While intentions on policy towards expenditure and rating must always be a central political issue, the level of factual uncertainty surrounding the revenue needs for the first year of the new authority is such that any pledges other than of the most general kind are likely to be dangerous. As in the case of manpower, it will not be possible to reach any degree of certainty about how the advantages of scale can be made real and where extra resources are needed until well into the first operative year. Neither will it be possible to work out the implications of the unequal provision of services between areas of former authorities until then. The first few years must be regarded as a period of intense critical evaluation of services and expenditures.

This carries an important implication for the structure of the new organisation. The dominance of 'hand-to-mouth' considerations in the interim period should not be allowed to conceal the importance of building into the new authority from the start powerful means for policy and organisational analysis, so that the potentialities of the new scale of operation can be realised.

## 11 Challenge and Response: Size, Human Relationships, the Public and the Councillor

WE HAVE now traced the principal tasks of reorganisation and seen how they inter-twine. The most critical task is almost certainly the making of appointments. An appointment is an allocation of responsibility for an area of work. Its consequences can hardly be reversed. It determines what is subsequently achieved, both in quality and quantity.

Appointments are also critical to the timetable of reorganisation. If those who will later be accountable for the results of the new authority are to participate in building an organisation which will give them the means for achieving those results, the final determination of the shape and structure of the administration must await their appointment. We have argued that much can be done to prepare the way in advance, but there can be no guarantee in advance that decisions made before the appointments will meet the requirements of the new leadership. The many uncertainties about the nature of prospects in the new authority cannot be resolved until responsibilities have been allocated.

This is true for the elected member level. Joint *ad hoc* committees for reorganisation have a moral responsibility to the new council but cannot be held accountable for what happens after its election. Responsibility to the electorate is defined only with elections, and more specifically with the appointment of chairmen and committees. Only then can the chain of accountability be extended by the permanent appointment of officers. The construction of the administration, of plans and policies, of the capacity for effective action, depends upon the appointment of chief officers. This must be a focal point of concern for the new council. But it is also important to ensure that all the information and preparations are made in advance to enable the new chief officers to work out with the councillors the many issues that have to be determined before staff can be given their jobs in the new authority.

Decisions must be made on the way services are to be grouped and



### *Setting up the new authorities*

organised, the degree of decentralisation and the location of offices. These decisions must be taken in the light of detailed knowledge of the existing services and resources. Thus extensive surveys are necessary before appointments are made in order to make the necessary data available. The data required can only be clearly identified by anticipating the practical problems and possibilities of reorganisation inherent in the local situation. Preparatory studies are therefore needed of possible solutions to the problems of the new authority. They may show that some decisions are urgently necessary before permanent appointments are made and even before elections are held if the best possibilities are to be realised. They should provide an invaluable basis for thought and action by officers when they are appointed to responsibilities in the new authority.

In some circumstances it may be held that decisions which we suggest must wait until the appointment of the new chief officers can be safely anticipated and that the time saved by such anticipation and the extent to which it relieves uncertainties will justify the extent to which this may circumscribe the future office-holders. We do not rule out this possibility: what is important is that the advantages and disadvantages of such anticipatory decisions should be taken fully into account.

#### THE PROBLEM OF INCREASED SCALE

The arrangements and co-operation required to ensure preparation for work under the new committees and chief officers have been described in Chapters 2 to 4. The work will be performed effectively only if the size and nature of the problems involved are appreciated by councillors and officers. Most of the new authorities will be on a different scale from that with which those involved were previously familiar. This implies that the management problems faced by councillors and administrators will have a different character. Large organisations must be structured differently from small ones, although they may be carrying out the same work. Councillors and officers at the centre of a large administration must accept that they cannot keep track of everything, as is often possible in the small authority, and that they cannot expect to have knowledge of the details of problems except in a few cases. The close-knit nature of the levels and sections of the administration is lost. Responsibilities for control must be diffused. Research has indicated that larger organisations are more stressful. "The curve of stress begins to rise as we turn from tiny organisations to those of 50 or 100 persons, and the rising curve continues until we encounter the organisational giants. Only for organisations of more than 5,000 persons does the curve of stress level off—perhaps because an organisation so large represents some

kind of psychological infinity and further changes are unfelt."<sup>1</sup> Thus the prevalent fear of greater size, strongly evidenced in our inquiry (page 90) and noted by writers on industrial mergers<sup>2</sup> appears to have justification.

An increase in size presents a challenge to tackle the factors which induce this anxiety and consequences such as defensive attitudes and absenteeism. Kahn, in the study quoted above, maintains that the stressfulness stems in considerable part from attempting to maintain a level of central co-ordination which is self-defeating. The stress is relieved as subordinates are given more autonomy to manage their own co-ordination without close supervision. Increased responsibility is an aspect of job enrichment which, there is extensive evidence to show, is a principal means to good work motivation.<sup>3</sup>

Anxiety is also caused by uncertainties arising from ignorance about what is going on in other parts of a large organisation. Fears of this kind can be overcome to some extent by improved means of communication, as advocated in Chapter 8.

Both the problem of co-ordination and the problem of communication are of course more difficult than normal in the circumstances of reorganisation and this is one reason why they require such a high degree of thought and care. Some immediate problems can be deferred by allowing, where possible, existing routines to run on unchanged for a while after reorganisation, as suggested in Chapter 7, but in practice there has been limited scope for this approach in amalgamations in the past and it must be accepted that in many cases most routines will have to be re-established.

#### CREATING A NEW NETWORK OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The wide distribution of tasks to groups of officers throughout the constituent authorities will help to establish informal networks of communication for the new authority, linking groups in the different constituent administrations. Functional co-operation or early integration of resources for training etc. will also help. Outside the official structure it may be hoped that staff and professional associations in constituent authorities will be able to organise inter-authority meetings and functions. Councillors and officers in past instances have organised social functions to bring people together, break down barriers and create a new sense of identity with the new authority.

<sup>1</sup> Kahn, R. L. et al., *Organisational Stress*, pp. 394-5, Wiley, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> See Raphael, W. and M. W. Zimmerman, *After the Take-over*, pp. 4-5, Nat. Inst. of Industrial Psychology, 1963; *Mergers—part 2*, p. 9, Action Society Trust, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Herzberg, Frederick, *Work and the Nature of Man*, World Publishing Company, 1966; and Herzberg et al., *The Motivation to Work*, Wiley, 1959.

### *Setting up the new authorities*

Unless the leadership in the new authority cultivate a sense of purpose and opportunity, however, such a breaking down of barriers may be superficial and unproductive of good morale. There is a need at each stage to state interim objectives clearly, to make an unambiguous allocation of responsibilities and to broadcast information about the framework of planning within which officers can act. To complement the 'downflow' of information in the administration, good channels are needed for 'upflow' so that staff can report achievements, ask questions and express doubts. Where staff are under strain they will be especially sensitive to criticism which does not take into account the difficulties of their task and if they are not heartened by sincere expressions of appreciation of their achievement.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS

The public will form its image or 'stereotype' of the new authority during this transitional period. In many ways this may seem unfair: an authority should be judged by its achievements and these cannot be measured until long after the appointed day. Nevertheless, first impressions tend to be notoriously permanent and there is little or nothing that can be done to change this fact. Hence the need for special care over the information available to the press.

If voting reflects the degree of interest or faith in local government (a tenable proposition although swings in voting may be closely related to national issues), a study of changes in the level of voting before and after the reorganisations we studied leads to depressing conclusions. An 'electoral honeymoon' occurred in the voting for the new and extended authorities, the popular vote jumping by from 6% to over 20% in the areas concerned. But the year afterwards it slumped by over 4% in the Black Country, by over 15.4% on Teesside and 18.4% on Torbay. Thus there seems to have been a major loss of interest, particularly between the time the new councils were elected and when they took over their responsibilities. The responsibility may be partly attributed to the political parties but it may also reflect a growing cynicism about the new administrations, and there is some evidence in the local press to support the latter interpretation. A clear definition of the responsibility for public relations, advice to editors and local government correspondents on where they may obtain information and check facts on the joint committee and new council's plans and intentions may help to combat this tendency.

Special care is needed over the dissemination of information about reception arrangements for the public on the appointed day. Details of this kind have in some previous instances been incorporated in a special edition or supplement to the local newspaper prepared to



### *Challenge and response*

mark the historic occasion. Such editions have included feature articles to convey to the public the basic facts and potential of the new authority.

Voluntary associations with connections with local government will require much earlier information about how the reorganisation will affect them in preparing their long-range plans. Interest groups concerned with future planning will also require effective lines of communication with the new authority. This is likely to cause difficulties in the interim period before the new council is geared to take decisions. Chairmen of appropriate committees and officers, when appointed, can nevertheless use approaches from such groups as means to become familiar with their aims and the problems they raise and to achieve a dialogue with spokesmen for particular interests which will be important for future public relations.

Special mention should be made of the interest of teachers and the schools and colleges in reorganisation. Teachers will be interested in the plans for the new authority both as employees of the local authority and as educators. As employees they should be given news of how reorganisation will affect them at the earliest possible date. It may be felt of value for the chief education officers of constituent authorities for a new local education authority, before a chief education officer is appointed, to issue jointly an information bulletin to schools in the new area on the effect of the changes. The new chief education officer will doubtless wish to have a channel for sending practical advice as well as more general information to teachers at the earliest opportunity and should be able to rely upon the existing local education authorities to help him to achieve this aim. Similar considerations apply in other departments which are responsible for institutions such as children's and old people's homes.

Many teachers will be interested as educators and citizens to inform their pupils and students of the reforms and to involve them in activities which will fix the significance of the events in their minds. In a previous instance a teacher's committee was formed to organise inter-school activities to mark the occasion. The possibilities are limitless—projects, exhibitions, sports, processions, parties, special holidays. In most of these matters the teachers concerned must themselves judge what is most worthwhile, but they may expect and appreciate the interest and support of the local authority. For the wider public the birth of a new local authority has been marked in some cases in the past by special events—most conspicuously by displays of fireworks. Constituent authorities have also spent funds to celebrate their past. It seems to the authors much more justifiable to celebrate future prospects.

## *Setting up the new authorities*

### LEARNING ABOUT THE NEW AUTHORITY AND PREPARING FOR ITS OPERATION

We have written above about the problems of increased size and the new demands it brings to the individual participant. In Chapter 7 we commented on the fears and the reality of changes in the nature of the individual officer's work. In Chapters 7 and 9 we have stated the need to familiarise groups of officers with new tasks, with the implication that in some cases practical training is necessary. Problems of adaptation will be general and systematic preparation for the changes in the nature and conditions of work will be valuable.

At different levels and in a number of different ways training can help people to appreciate and prepare for their new responsibilities. Councillors and candidates for election to the new council will wish to familiarise themselves with the problems of the new authority. In many cases political parties may be expected to organise talks and study groups. But these activities will not be accessible to all members, and provincial councils, university extra-mural departments and other educational agencies and institutions familiar with work in this field should be able to provide a valuable service by organising courses and seminars open to all councillors and other members of the public wanting to study the problems and opportunities of reorganisation. It is to be hoped that existing local authorities will give support and encouragement to well-conceived schemes for this purpose.

Management training is of especial importance for staff in the senior and middle grades who will bear the brunt of establishing the new systems. Where a significant increase is to occur in the scale of operation, special regard is needed to the implications for management, some of which we have discussed above. Training arrangements may provide the best context in which senior officers are able to study management tasks and work with officers of other authorities to exchange and develop ideas. The increased responsibilities of middle management during the reorganisation period and the higher expectations which must be maintained of performance in the new authorities will place a heavy responsibility on administrative staff at intermediate levels, and it should be a primary objective to ensure that they are well-prepared to meet the challenge. Management principles which may appear unnecessary or irrelevant in the small authority take on significance with the problems of co-ordination, control and human relations entailed by larger scale and the need for major innovation. With the greater diffusion of responsibility and the need for setting up new arrangements which size and rapid change imply, preliminary study and an understanding of approaches other than those contained in the traditions of an officer's

### *Challenge and response*

own authority can be of great value. Perhaps the foremost aims must be to encourage a systematic but inventive and flexible approach to problems of both a technical and a human nature, and a greater clarity of objectives. A most important function of training in this situation should be bringing officers into groups to identify and discuss the nature of common problems: to create a setting for open dialogue on means of improvement in which the normal pressures of an administrative post are for a short time absent. In many cases the training group may provide much the best opportunity for working out and developing new systems for the new authority. For example, information storage and retrieval in filing systems, electronic data processing systems, terrier systems, etc. are key functions in securing efficient operation, and studies of the optimal systems for the new authority, bringing in O and M staff and operational staff might be used to develop and appraise ideas and point the way to what might best serve the needs of the new authority. Even junior training groups on office systems and other matters might be encouraged to put forward ideas for appraisal.

A higher degree of specialisation in the new authority will be a source of benefit only if officers who have previously been responsible for more general work are able to develop their competence in the more specialised fields to which they are allotted. Changes in jobs, inevitable in a large-scale reorganisation, may create exceptional needs for re-training in the early period of the new authority.

As plans for the new authority become firm, officers with special knowledge might be able to use training classes to explain and discuss these with other members of staff. It is especially important that the basic organisation of the new authority, the location of facilities and the allocation of functions is 'got over' to all members of staff.

We have already mentioned the importance of a directory to new services and staff (Chapter 9). This by itself will not be sufficient and the training context may be used to ensure that staff, especially those responsible for directing the public to the right sources of help and information within the authority, are familiar with the new arrangements.

Much can be done by formal training arrangements, but this should not conceal the fact that the greater part of training must be informal. Departmental and sectional heads and supervisors will have a major task to ensure that staff understand and can operate systems with which they may have had no previous acquaintance and in fostering co-operation and self-dependent attitudes.

#### **COUNCILLORS AND THE INCREASED VOLUME OF BUSINESS**

In some cases of reorganisation we found that tension had developed



### *Setting up the new authorities*

between elected members from the smaller authorities and those councillors and officers from large authorities because of differences in how they expected committee business to be managed. The difficulties reflected wide differences in how the councillor-officer relationship was conceived and were related to what we have said above about problems of size. In the small authorities members can reasonably expect to control officers' work and to master what is done in some detail. The effects are not all beneficial: such control can be oppressive, dampening to initiative and harmful to efficiency because of slowness of procedure. In the large authority such detailed control becomes impossible. The volume of business is such that committee agenda are in danger of being clogged with trivia and responsiveness and speed are hindered.

The danger of draining away energies in excessively long meetings is especially acute in the first year of a new authority when new policies have to be made across the full range of local authority responsibilities, arguments about procedural matters are rife and underlying inter-authority acrimony and probably larger committees and council meetings tend to make progress slow and difficult. One symptom in the past has been council meetings of an exhausting length. In all three amalgamations we studied some early council meetings stretched to six hours or more and the average length declined only gradually.

The potential of the authority cannot be realised unless officers are given wide scope for creative staff work and can manage routine matters and the execution of approved policies without repeated references to committees, while members give their time to study and review of policies, determination of guide-lines, a selective monitoring of results and work in their constituencies to identify and correct grievances and keep well-informed of public needs and reactions. All this has been set out in the Maud Management Report<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere, but many councillors may never have recognised its cogency before because the recommendations had limited application to the small-scale administration. The deflection of interest to key issues rather than to detail demands a high level of trust in officers' judgment. This is one reason why the selection of chief officers is a task of the highest importance. It is also the reason why the councillor in a small authority who believes that time spent in committee must increase in ratio with the size of the new authority (we had evidence of this viewpoint) is mistaken. His rôle in committee becomes more important and demanding, since he will be dealing with decisions of wider significance. But it will not be proportionately more demanding

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<sup>1</sup> *Management of Local Government*, Vol. 1, Report of the Committee, pp. 37-40, HMSO, 1967.

### *Challenge and response*

in hours because so much of the detailed work of deciding on instances will be covered by approved general guide-lines which he will share in making.

Outside the committee, the councillor cannot normally expect the intimate day-to-day contact with chief officers which he may enjoy in a small authority. The large number of councillors and the strenuous nature of the chief officer's duties mean that interviews with chief officers must be restricted to matters of importance where a councillor cannot obtain satisfaction by other means. The observance of a formal procedure for submitting inquiries may be necessary, and matters may be settled by contacts with subordinate staff who are likely to have a more intimate knowledge of a particular problem than the head of department. In the large department the head cannot and should not try to be acquainted with everything that is going on, although he retains responsibility and must have information to enable him to put matters right when they are going astray.

Many councillors will therefore have difficult problems of adjustment. Not only will they have to learn to work with new groups of people with different styles and philosophies. They may have to study the problems of speaking to larger and more diverse meetings, new forms of organisation and ways of coping with bigger responsibilities both in terms of the numbers of people represented, higher scales of expenditure and a higher degree of officer expertise.

We have written in Chapter I about the difficulty for new councillors of rising above parochial concern and identifying with the interests of the new authority as a whole. This challenge exists from the earliest meetings of the joint committees. This book may seem unbalanced because of its preoccupation with means in a period when it is more than usually important to steer by objectives. For example, it is of little use to preach the importance of identifying with a new authority if the idea of that authority does not embody objectives with which people want to identify. We have seen that circumstances in the short and hectic period of setting up the new authority are not propitious to the elaboration of elaborate sets of objectives and programmes for achieving them. At the same time the philosophy of the new authority is being laid; the values and relationships it will embody are being constructed. These values and relationships are in a sense more fundamental than any formal set of aims and objectives. When appointments are made, the leading figures in the new authority, the main originators of the new administration, will be chosen not just for administrative or professional competence but because they are the men and women judged to be most likely to promote the values which the selectors think important and to

### *Setting up the new authorities*

establish the relationships conducive to the successful achievement of these values.

Setting up the new authorities is the task of embodying relationships and the underlying values in an organisation. At the beginning of Chapter 1 we stated the explicit objectives of the government in initiating the reorganisation of local government. The task of reorganisation may be briefly stated as establishing in a new administration the capacity to ensure these and other objectives which councillors see as vital functions of local authorities in the period of accelerating change in our society that lies ahead. The task is perhaps more exciting than any other councillors and officers have faced in this century. The benefits will exceed the costs and the intentions achieved only if it is tackled with vision and foresight.



# Appendix: An Agenda for Reorganisation

## *Contents*

- 1 Joint committee – establishment
- 2 Joint committee – meeting
- 3 Joint committee – advice to central government
- 4 Joint committee – advice to new council and appointments
- 5 Joint committee – consultation with constituent authorities and other bodies
- 6 Joint committee – urgent action
- 7 Action by officers
- 8 Party organisation
- 9 Election and first meeting of new council
- 10 Matters of immediate concern for 'central' committee of new council
- 11 Matters for urgent reports to 'central' committee by chief officers
- 12 Other matters for report by chief officers and heads of department
- 13 Staff matters
- 14 Establishments
- 15 Appointments and transfer of staff
- 16 Accommodation, furniture, etc
- 17 Communication and public relations
- 18 Data processing
- 19 Financial estimates

*Note*

The assumption is made in the following list that the local authorities concerned in setting up a new authority are able to co-operate successfully in establishing an effective joint committee to act on their behalf. If they fail to do so, or if they set up a committee which is ineffective, most of the activities designated for the joint committee or its secretariat must somehow be carried out, sooner or later, with or without agreement. Some decisions cannot be postponed and action will be necessary without the joint committee's advice: others will go by default or be postponed until the short and hectic period of office of the new council before the appointed day when decisions with long-term effects will have to be taken on the spur of the moment with limited study or consultation.

Other assumptions relate to the way in which central government will legislate for the transition and the rôle it will play. These are based mainly upon precedent and such information as is available about government intentions at the time of writing, including the text of the Local Government Bill, November 1971. These intentions and the text of the Bill are subject to amendment and it is important to emphasise that the list will require correction as further information becomes available.

The inter-dependence of activities and logic of action is indicated wherever this is clear. In many cases we have suggested who should be responsible for particular activities. Local circumstances, however, will determine what is feasible or well-advised at each point. Every case is unique and a list of this kind cannot do more than provide starting-points for the complex and demanding task of working out the demands of the local situation.

The list cannot of course be at all comprehensive. We have sought to include what is important and central. Each service has its own needs and it is to be hoped that each group of specialists will prepare its own check list.<sup>1</sup> Page references to the main text are given in the right hand column.

	Page
1 <i>Joint committee – establishment</i>	
1. 1 Clerks of constituent authorities discuss form and procedure for setting up joint committee.	10
1. 2 Clerks discuss arrangements with political leaders in their own authorities.	11

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<sup>1</sup> Accountants already have such a list in the IMTA South East Associates Report No. 3, *Reorganisation: A Treasurer's Manual*, November 1970.

*Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation*

1. 3	Political representatives and clerks	Page
1.3.1	formulate proposals for	
(a)	constitution of joint committee	10 – 12
(b)	terms of reference	9, 12ff
(c)	arrangements for meeting expenditure	10
1.3.2	decide who will convene first meeting of joint committee.	9 – 10
1. 4	Clerks report proposals to their authorities.	10
1. 5	Councils	
1.5.1	decide on proposals (1.3.1 (a-b))	10
1.5.2	appoint representatives to joint committee	11 – 12
1.5.3	authorise officers to prepare reports for the joint committee as requested and to co-operate in making studies on the problems of the transitional period (see 7) and in exchanging information.	30ff
	Failure to agree at this point may lead to a repetition of the cycle 1.3 to 1.5.	
	In the event of continued failure to agree the Secretary of State may exercise powers to determine the number of representatives to be appointed by the authorities concerned.	
1. 6	Convenor, in consultation with other clerks, draws up agenda for first meeting, fixes date and place of meeting and sends notices to representatives.	10 – 11
1. 7	If considered necessary, representatives from constituent authorities meet to discuss management of business for first meeting of joint committee. Set in motion preparation of reports on matters of urgency.	11
2	<i>Joint committee – meeting</i>	
2. 1	Elects Chairman and Vice-Chairman.	13
2. 2	If considered necessary adopts standing orders (those of a constituent authority?).	13
2. 3	Receives report from clerks of constituent authorities on programme of action.	13
2. 4	Appoints clerk, secretary or coordinating officer.	13, 35
2. 5	Decides what provision shall be made for press.	
2. 6	Decides arrangements for distribution of minutes or reports to constituent authorities.	
2. 7	Arranges date, time and place of future meetings.	13
	(Activities 2.1 to 2.7 may normally be included in	



### *Setting up the new authorities*

agenda for first meeting. Other matters which may be dealt with at the first meeting or later are given below.) Page

#### *Internal organisation*

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 2. 8 Appointment of working groups or sub-committees on special subjects.                                                                                                                                                                                            | 13 - 14        |
| 2. 9 Decisions on expenses for chairman and members.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                |
| 2.10 Appointment of special staff if considered necessary to assist the clerk or coordinating officer to prepare reports on specialised matters and to carry out preparatory work for the new administration (see 4.1-4) by secondment from constituent authorities. | 36 - 39        |
| 2.11 Decision on remuneration of secretariat.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                |
| 2.12 Appointment of consultants on matters where it is felt external advice is desirable.                                                                                                                                                                            | 38             |
| 2.13 Consultation with staff representatives on problems of staff transferring to new authority. Make arrangements for channeling information to staff.                                                                                                              | 22 - 23, 102ff |

### 3 *Joint committee - advice to central government*

The central government departments may be expected to seek local advice on a number of matters, and to employ the clerk to the joint committee as their main correspondent whenever convenient. Most of the consultations will relate to provisions in the statutory orders and will be of a technical nature (see 7.2). There will also be a number of matters on which the views of local elected representatives will be sought and on which joint committees may or may not have been set up in time to comment.

14ff

These may include:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                          |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 3. 1 Proposals by the English Boundary Commission for non-metropolitan district areas.                                                                                                   | 14 - 15 |
| 3. 2 Names of the new districts.                                                                                                                                                         | 17      |
| 3. 3 Size of council, electoral areas and other arrangements for the first election. According to the government proposals at the time of writing, the following steps will be involved: | 15 - 17 |
| <i>Counties, metropolitan and Welsh districts</i>                                                                                                                                        | 15 - 16 |
| (December 1971-December 1972.)                                                                                                                                                           |         |
| 3.3.1 Existing authorities receive draft schemes of representation from the Secretary of State after second reading of Local Government Bill (say                                        |         |

## *Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation*

<p>December 1971) and publish locally (it would be possible to act through the joint committee machinery by agreement);</p> <p>3.3.2 Existing authorities (and/or joint committees?) receive local comment and make statement on proposals to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>Where difficulties arise:</p> <p>3.3.3 Informal local consultations with government representatives. (Draft schemes then considered by small advisory committee; Secretary of State announces decisions by end of December 1972, 3-4 months before elections.)</p> <p><i>Non-metropolitan districts</i> (December 1972-April 1973.)</p> <p>3.3.4 Clerks of existing county councils receive Secretary of State's schemes of representation.</p> <p>3.3.5 Clerks of existing county councils in conjunction with town clerks as appropriate, prepare and publish proposals for electoral areas.</p> <p>3.3.6 Joint committees may consider schemes and make recommendations.</p> <p>3.3.7 Proposals and comments submitted to Secretary of State. Local Government Boundary Commission gives advice. Government announces decisions by April 1973.</p>	<p>Page</p> <p>15 - 17</p>
<p>3. 4 Constitution, election and membership of other public bodies.</p> <p>3. 5 Functions or areas of any public body (e.g. joint bodies for sewerage, planning, fire protection and police), justice of the peace, stipendiary magistrate, coroner, custos rotulorum, lord lieutenant, lieutenant, sheriff and other officials and their costs and expenses.</p> <p>3. 6 Local Acts and orders.</p> <p>3. 7 Provisions for differential local rating.</p> <p>3. 8 Transfer of properties, rights and liabilities.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>17</p> <p></p> <p>19 - 20</p> <p>18 - 19</p>
<p>4 <i>Joint committee - advice to new council and appointments</i></p> <p>It will be entirely at the discretion of the joint committee what advice it decides to offer. Its recommendations might cover the following matters:</p> <p>4. 1 Report on management and structures for the new authority (follows 7.1.1).</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p>21 - 23</p>

## *Setting up the new authorities*

- |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 4. 2                                                                                | Report on staffing (follows 7.1.2).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Page 23 |
| 4. 3                                                                                | Report on accommodation needs and accommodation planning (follows 7.1.3).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 23 - 24 |
| 4. 4                                                                                | Report on other needs emerging from officers' studies which may most appropriately be dealt with in the joint committee's report to the new authority (see 7 below).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 24      |
| 4. 5                                                                                | General report on work of joint committee (see 7.2.6) and staff policies (see 2.13), including form of consultative machinery. (This is a central problem area and the joint committees might consider arranging for an officer to work on the problem full-time.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |         |
| 4. 6                                                                                | Designate the existing authority whose clerk will<br>(a) take and receive delivery of declarations of acceptance of office from councillors of the new authority,<br>(b) convene the first meeting of the new council at the place he appoints,<br>(c) publish the notice of the meeting and issue the summonses to attend;<br>and designate the authority or authorities whose Clerk or deputy Clerk will exercise any of the functions to be exercised by the proper officer of the new authority in relation to the first meeting, and the authority or authorities who will provide standing orders. <sup>1</sup> | 10      |
| 4. 7                                                                                | Designate the persons to exercise the functions of chairman and vice-chairman at the first meeting of the new council until the election of the substantive chairman. <sup>1</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 10      |
| 5 <i>Joint committee consultation with constituent authorities and other bodies</i> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |         |
| 5. 1                                                                                | Receive report on future capital commitments and development programmes of constituent authorities and decide policy with regard to development by these authorities in the interim period (follows 7.1.6).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 24 - 25 |
| 5. 2.                                                                               | Consider and comment on new major capital schemes by constituent authorities (follows 7.1.6).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 27 - 28 |
| 5. 3                                                                                | In the light of 4.2 above and advice from Staff Commission, decide on interim staffing policy recommendations, e.g. if constituent authorities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |         |

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<sup>1</sup> Local Government Bill, November 1971, as amended in Committee, February 1972.



# *Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation*

should be advised to align recruitment policies, if advice should be given on regrading of staff (follows 7.1.2).	Page 26 - 27
5. 4 Consider if constituent authorities should be requested to aim at maintaining their financial balances at a defined level to provide resources for the new authority on the appointed day.	26
5. 5 Consider ways in which transition may be eased by earlier integration of services and staff. (Some proposals may be expected to arise from suggestions of staff groups (see 7.1.10-16)). Secondment of staff between authorities may be helpful: it may even be possible to unify some services in practice before the appointed day. (In one case it has been suggested that appointments to vacancies for chief officers be made jointly by the constituent authorities.) Consider any other matters put before the committee by constituent authorities to obtain its advice.	34 27 - 28
5. 6 Consider requests for advice by outside bodies on long-term matters affecting the area, e.g. an airport development, marina, festival arrangements proposed for after appointed day.	28
6 <i>Joint committee - urgent action</i> Arrange for urgent action in collaboration with constituent authorities on matters arising from surveys, etc. Although the joint committee is not an executive body, it can collaborate with constituent authorities in arranging for appointments, accommodation and purchases shown to be urgent by local studies (see 4 and 5 above).	
7 <i>Action by officers (and consultants if deemed necessary)</i>	
7. 1 Form inter-authority panels or groups to prepare: 7.1.1 Survey of management structure in constituent authorities. Preliminary consideration of management structure at committee and departmental levels in new authority (precedes 4.1). (Study group set up by local authority associations and government intends to report in 1972.)	30ff 21 - 23

## *Setting up the new authorities*

7.1.2 Preliminary survey of staff in constituent authorities and, as soon as practicable, staff available for transfer from other authorities. Consultations should be begun between county and district levels as soon as possible in view of the necessity for major transfers of staff between levels. Compare staff available with estimates of requirements. (Precedes 4.2.)	Page 23, 31
7.1.3 Survey of accommodation (precedes 4.3). Description of each building (floor area, units of useful space for office accommodation, function, tenure). Preliminary estimate of needs.	24, 31, 117
7.1.4 Survey of telephone communication (linked with 7.1.3). Details of Post Office lines and internal systems from constituent authorities.	31, 116ff, 119
7.1.5 Survey of financial resources and estimates of expenditure in new authority by projection of current expenditure.	31, 120ff
7.1.6 Survey of capital commitments programmes of constituent authorities and financial implications. (Precedes 5.1 and 5.2.)	24 – 26, 31, 120ff
7.1.7 Programme for reorganisation. A regularly updated network analysis is suggested for main activities to ensure logical sequence, comprehensive preparation and best allocation of time.	5, 30
7.1.8 Ground work on preparation of schemes of representation and electoral rolls.	15 – 17
7.1.9 Survey of conditions of service in constituent authorities for staff and other employees.	75 – 76
7.1.10 Survey of data-processing programmes, equipment, plans and needs. Prepare proposals for integration (see 18, p. 152). Study of provision of other central services for new authority, e.g. central purchasing, transport.	31
(Items 7.1.1 to 7.1.10 are of a general nature. The activities below might be undertaken by panels and working parties representing particular services, but cross-representation between departments will be necessary where the allocation of functions between authorities differs in constituent authorities. Panels of heads of department may set up appropriate working groups.)	37
7.1.11 Surveys of systems and procedures, leading	

# Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation

where possible to standardisation and co-ordination in the interim period <sup>1</sup> .	Page 31 - 34
7.1.12 Surveys of equipment, which may lead to rationalisation of purchases in the interim period.	31 - 34
7.1.13 Surveys of information indicating needs, e.g. age-groups and distribution, size of groups requiring special services, mileage and related data for highway maintenance, housing waiting lists. Where authorities are to be divided reliable figures should be provided for pupils, clients, etc, to be transferred to each constituent authority.	31 - 32
7.1.14 Surveys of provision for needs, e.g. places in children's and old people's homes, special schools and housing units, schools intake policies, housing stock; policies e.g. pupil allocation, students' awards, rent policy. This might lead to some rationalisation before the appointed day where the political situation permits.	31
7.1.15 Survey of training needs with view to possibility of integration of training in constituent authorities, in interests of new authority.	31
7.1.16 Survey of other matters to come before council (see 11 onwards) which may be effectively prepared at this stage.	31
7. 2 Staff work to provide information to central departments in preparation of ministerial orders, (which may be carried out by the clerk to the joint committee and his secretary in conjunction with the clerks of the constituent authorities, with the treasurers on financial matters and with heads of other services as appropriate).	32
7.2.1 Reports to joint committees on 3.1 to 3.7. (See 7.1.8).	
7.2.2 Verification of boundary lines where necessary.	
7.2.3 Local provision to be incorporated in the Orders, if necessary, for:	
(a) Registration of electors	
(b) <i>Ad hoc</i> bodies and areas of jurisdiction (see 3.5)	17
(c) Licensing of premises	
(d) Sunday entertainments	
(e) Licensing of tracks for betting	

<sup>1</sup> An example of matters studied by a finance and rating panel is given in *Reorganisation: A Treasurer's Manual*, South East Associates (IMTA), November 1970.



### *Setting up the new authorities*

- (f) Management of schools etc and instruments of government Page  
(g) Transfer of health services  
(h) Transitional provisions on local and adoptive acts.  
(Examine local acts and by-laws to identify where immediate legal provision must be made to ensure continuity. Local acts and by-laws will normally stay in force in the areas to which they previously applied, but in some instances this will not be feasible, e.g. an act giving power to operate a capital fund.)  
(i) Custody of local authority records, etc. where provision is necessary  
(j) Transfer of property, liabilities, etc. (see 3.8, 7.1.3) 18 – 19  
(k) Transfer of balances to new authorities  
(l) Provisions for differential rating on a transitional basis 19 – 20  
(m) Any other provisions where local consultation is considered necessary

7.2.4 Chief officers of constituent authorities examine local inter-authority arrangements to identify where immediate legal provision must be made to ensure continuity.

7.2.5 Clerk to joint committee refers any matter of policy arising from 7.2.2, 7.2.3, (a)–(m) or 7.2.4 to joint committees (3.1–8).

7.2.6 Clerk prepares reports on work and recommendations of joint committee for its approval and submission to the new council.

- 8 *Party organisation* 28 – 29
8. 1 Party groups of constituent authorities, where these exist, set up co-ordinating committee for new authority.
  8. 2 Co-ordinating committee sets up policy study groups and machinery for election campaign and publicity.
  8. 3 Recommends procedure for selection of candidates.
  8. 4 Selection of candidates.
  8. 5 Policy study groups submit reports to co-ordinating committee.
  8. 6 Co-ordinating committee defines party platform.
  8. 7 Fight election.

# *Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation*

8. 8	Group meeting, including:	Page
8.8.1	Appointment of group officers	
8.8.2	Consider agenda for first meeting of council (see 9.3)	
8.8.3	Liaison arrangements with groups in constituent authorities.	
9	<i>Election and first meeting of new council</i>	
9. 1	Prepare electoral register as soon as sufficient knowledge of schemes of representation is available and make other arrangements necessary for first election. (See 7.1.8. The returning officer will be an officer of an existing authority designated by order by the Secretary of State. <sup>1</sup> )	15 - 17
9. 2	Election.	
9. 3	Preliminary consultations between the local political leaderships and the acting clerk for the new council (see 4.6) on the business and management of the first meeting. <sup>1</sup>	40 - 42
9. 4	The acting clerk circulates the notice for the first meeting, not later than 21 days following the date of election, and publishes the notice at the place he has designated for the meeting. <sup>1</sup>	
9. 5	First meeting of the council. The acting chairman and vice chairman will be designated by the joint committee or, if there is none, by the Secretary of State (4.7). <sup>1</sup>	40 - 42
9.5.1	Election of chairman	
9.5.2	Election of vice chairman.	
9.5.3	Appoint interim committee or committees (see 10 below for functions) with appropriate delegation to enable it to take urgent action.	42 - 44
9.5.4	Appoint acting clerk and chief executive officer <sup>2</sup> , treasurer and possibly other acting officers.	
9.5.5	Appoint bankers and confer authority to sign cheques.	
9.5.6	Adopt temporary common seal.	

<sup>1</sup> As provided for in the Local Government Bill, November 1971, and subject to amendment by Parliament.

<sup>2</sup> The words "clerk" and "chief executive officer" are used to describe the senior officer of the council but do not imply that this should be his formal designation or that his responsibilities should be identical with those of clerks in constituent authorities.

## *Setting up the new authorities*

9.5.7 Approve arrangements for printing minutes and other urgent contracts.	Page
9.5.8 Receive report of joint committee to the new council (see 4.5).	
9.5.9 Receive report on programme for period before appointed day, if not included in joint committee's report (see 7.1.7).	
9.5.10 Decide time, place and frequency of meetings of council.	
9.5.11 Authorise necessary expenditure by officers and make any other urgent delegations to officers. Among other matters which <i>might</i> be included are:	
9.5.12 Resolution on admission of the press to committees.	
9.5.13 Chairman's allowance.	
9.5.14 Remuneration of acting clerk and chief executive and other acting officers.	
9.5.15 Authorisation of officers to appoint staff assistants.	
9.5.16 Arrange for exchange of information with constituent authorities, other authorities and joint committee(s), e.g. by circulation of agenda and reports.	
9.5.17 Future accommodation for council and committees (see 4.3).	
9.5.18 Urgent action on provision of accommodation (see 4.3).	
9.5.19 District Councils may wish to decide if an early meeting should be called to petition for a royal charter conveying borough status or transferring earlier charters and special privileges of existing authorities.	
10 <i>Matters of immediate concern for 'central' committee(s) of new council</i>	42 – 44
10. 1 Programme of action till appointed day (see 7.1.7).	
10. 2 Committee structure and functions (see 4.1).	47
10. 3 Selection of members for committees and representation on outside bodies.	
10. 4 Terms of appointment for chief executive officer <sup>1</sup> , including job description. (If it is decided to employ	

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<sup>1</sup> See Note to 9.5.4. above.





<i>Setting up the new authorities</i>	Page
11. 2 Guide lines for planning departmental establishments.	47ff
11. 3 Appointments needed for inter-departmental establishment work and other work in transitional period.	49 – 51
11. 4 Provisions for transfer of staff and staff safeguards. In particular:	
11.4.1 Procedure for staff selection.	59ff
11.4.2 Estimated incidence of redundancy and extent to which Council can re-assure staff on this subject (see 5.3).	26 – 27, 62 – 64
11.4.3 Examination of other possible undertakings which might relieve staff anxiety, e.g. that any new terms of service would not be less favourable than those formerly enjoyed.	63 – 64
11. 5 Allocation of office accommodation to departments: and any needs to be met by purchase, leasing of buildings or acquisition of prefabricated buildings; disposal of surplus accommodation (see 7.1.3, and 9.5.18).	113ff
11. 6 Need to order major equipment for new authority.	
11. 7 Telephone needs for new authority.	116ff
11. 8 Capital developments, commitments and programme for new authority (see 5.1 and 5.2). The estimates and details of loan-debt, etc., will be required for first budget.	120ff
11. 9 Financial resources of new authority and projections of alternative levels of expenditure (see 5.2).	
12 <i>Other matters for report by chief officers and heads of departments</i>	
12. 1 Reports on services in constituent authorities and objectives in interim period, with tentative programme of action (groundwork from 7.1.11–16).	
12. 2 Departmental establishments. (It is suggested that these are submitted jointly by the head of department concerned, the establishment officer and the treasurer to a 'central' committee.) (See 11.2.)	49ff
12. 3 Urgent organisational matters for approval by or consultation with central departments, e.g. constitution of education committees, articles and instruments of government for colleges and schools.	
12. 4 Urgent schemes for new authority, e.g. on awards to	

*Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation*

- students; housing advances, rent schemes, allocation. Page  
In some cases current schemes may be allowed to run  
after the appointed day to give ample time for  
preparing an integrated scheme. In other cases this  
may not be possible (groundwork in 7.1.11-14). 32-33, 79, 82
12. 5 Financial support to outside bodies which will need  
early knowledge of whether their grants will be  
continued in order to plan for next financial year.  
(Especially difficult where authorities are being  
divided.)
12. 6 Drafting of new standing orders, including financial  
regulations.
12. 7 Insignia, common seal, etc, of new authority.
12. 8 Centralised purchasing arrangements and other central  
services (7.1.10). 118 - 119
- 13 *Staff matters* (see also 10.7, 11.3-4 above).
13. 1 Schemes for conditions of service for staff in new  
authority including: 75 - 77
- (a) hours of work
  - (b) general local holidays
  - (c) annual leave entitlement for all grades
  - (d) policies on granting of special leave
  - (e) special local salary weightings
  - (f) special means of recognising long service
  - (g) rulings on trade union membership
  - (h) vehicle and travelling allowances
  - (i) staff training grants and day release policy
  - (j) local exceptions from N.J.C. recommendations on  
conditions of service
  - (k) special local conditions and customs
  - (l) bonus incentive and other local schemes of pay-  
ment and allowances to industrial workers and  
machinery for consultation (see 10.7).
  - (m) admission of servants and part-time officers to  
superannuation fund
  - (n) conversion of non-contributory service and  
gratuities under the superannuation acts.
13. 2 Policy on abnormal overtime by staff not entitled to  
payments under N.J.C. scheme. 83



### *Setting up the new authorities*

- |                                                            |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 13.                                                        | 3 | Communication with staff. Special arrangements additional to joint consultative committees, e.g. staff bulletin, meetings, ensuring staff association secretaries are kept fully informed. Ensure details of provision for transfer, protection of terms and conditions of service, redundancy compensation, local rulings, provision for appeals, etc, are communicated to staff. | Page<br>74 – 75, 102ff |
| 13.                                                        | 4 | Transitional provisions for disturbance and travelling allowances.<br>13.4.1 Consider adoption of N.J.C. provisions on disturbances and travelling allowances for staff transferred to new places of work and determine local policies.                                                                                                                                            |                        |
| 13.                                                        | 5 | Consider if any other special measures required to assist mobility of staff, e.g. provision of temporary accommodation, private coach service.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 100 – 101              |
| 13.                                                        | 6 | Consider provision for car parking by staff.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                        |
| 13.                                                        | 7 | Consider provisions for staff meals and refreshments in new authority.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                        |
| 14 <i>Establishments</i> (see 11.2 and 12.2).              |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                        |
| 14.                                                        | 1 | Define responsibility for drafting and co-ordinating establishments and procedure for approval.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 49 – 52                |
| 14.                                                        | 2 | Draft functions of departments and compare to identify areas of overlap.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 22, 49                 |
| 14.                                                        | 3 | Assemble relevant data (see Chapter 5) and draft organisation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                        |
| 15 <i>Appointments and transfer of staff</i> (see 11.3–4). |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                        |
| 15.                                                        | 1 | Decide method of appointment after considering staff commission advice e.g. competitive interviews for posts or informal consultation and placement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 65ff                   |
| 15.                                                        | 2 | Display all departmental establishments so that they are seen by all members of staff eligible for appointment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 69, 73                 |
| 15.                                                        | 3 | Competitive interviews.<br>15.3.1 Circulate details of posts to be filled competitively to all offices containing officers eligible for appointment, staff associations and provincial council secretaries. (It is important to ensure that groups in all                                                                                                                          | 65 – 73                |

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Page        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| authorities with eligible officers and in outlying institutions, such as administrative staff in schools and colleges, are well informed.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |             |
| 15.3.2 Receive applications, ensure sufficient information available on each candidate, short-list.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |             |
| 15.3.3 Interview (by panel of senior officers?) for groups of posts at same level: discuss with each officer alternative possibilities available. Appoint. As far as possible interview at same time for same level of posts throughout the authority.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |             |
| 15.3.4 After interview discuss with unsuccessful applicants alternative possible appointments and ensure that further options are carried forward.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |             |
| <br>15. 4 <i>Informal placements</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <br>70 - 73 |
| 15.4.1 Ensure that adequate basic information is available on each officer, e.g. (a) name, (b) post, (c) age on a given date, (d) service in constituent authority, (e) service in previous authority (ies), (f) grade and salary point, (g) special allowances or additions with reasons for payment and other emoluments, (h) qualifications, (i) duties in brief. Each member of staff might also be asked to state briefly the types of work of which he has experience. |             |
| 15.4.2 Decide which groups of staff are to be taken into automatic consideration for each group of new posts, e.g. whether officers in the same kind of department are to be automatically considered.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |             |
| 15.4.3 Inform all officers of procedure under 15.4.2 and invite them to make known their wish to be considered for groups of posts for which they will not be automatically considered. (It is important that if at all possible location of offices in new authority should be known by this time so that an officer can take into consideration convenience of travel.)                                                                                                    |             |
| 15.4.4 Requests for cross-postings to be sent to officers responsible for appointments.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |             |
| 15.4.5 Provisional placement of staff in establishment by officers responsible.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |             |
| 15.4.6 Interview each officer and discuss placement: explain alternative possibilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |             |
| 15.4.7 Finalise placement and send particulars of proposed appointment to each officer.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |             |
| 15.4.8 Re-interview officers who wish their place-                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |             |



## *Setting up the new authorities*

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>ments to be reconsidered and make fresh placement if possible.</p> <p>15.4.9 Standard letters of appointment giving terms and conditions of service.</p> <p>15. 5 Ensure that cases of officers not accommodated by the above procedures are identified, possibilities of placement examined and problems discussed with the officers concerned early so that if termination of employment is necessary as long a notice as possible can be given and time allowed for possible placement in other authorities (see Chapter 6).</p> <p>15. 6 <i>Appeals</i></p> <p>15.6.1 Local arrangements for submission of appeals to tribunals.</p> <p>15.6.2 Local arrangements for appeals against hardship.</p> <p>15.6.3 Local arrangements for hearing appeals on wrong grading.</p> <p>15. 7 Define training needs as appointments are made.</p> | <p>Page</p> <p></p> <p>64 – 65, 73</p> <p>74 – 75</p> <p>119, 128–129</p> <p>113ff</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
- N.B. Staff in immediate contact with public and concerned with facilitating internal communications require special training to ensure effectiveness on and after appointed day, e.g. telephone operators, reception clerks, messengers. Staff due to handle new equipment will also require training and 'dummy runs'.
- 16 *Accommodation, furniture, etc* (see 4.3, 7.1.3–4, 9.5.17–18, and 11.5).
16. 1 Update plans in report (11.5) regularly as information on decentralisation policies, departmental staffs, etc, is received.
16. 2 Put in hand purchase, sales, losses, alterations, conversions, applications for planning permission, etc, as soon as there is enough certainty to proceed.
16. 3 Check needs for toilet facilities, heating, lighting, powerpoints, all accommodation to be taken over. Need for floor strengthening, redecoration. Put necessary work in hand.
16. 4 Appoint officer with general responsibility for furniture.
16. 5 Select and contract for standard range of office



*Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation*

- furniture for new authority and design procedure for ordering. Page
16. 6 Inform section heads appointed for new departments of the accommodation for their sections as soon as possible to enable them to report on and arrange:
- (a) any essential modifications;
  - (b) furniture they would want retained;
  - (c) new furniture required;
  - (d) shelving to be provided in advance;
  - (e) surplus furniture.
16. 7 Provide ample storage for furniture in transit.
16. 8 Devise timetable for removal and standard procedures for labelling furniture and equipment to be moved or left behind. Take removal contractor into consultation.
16. 9 Provide containers for loose equipment, stationery, etc.
- 17 *Communication and public relations* (see 7.1.4 and 11.7).
17. 1 Update telephone plans (11.7) regularly as information on establishment and accommodation allows in consultation with Post Office and contractor for internal systems. 116ff
17. 2 Decide councillors' and officers' entitlement to telephones. Put in hand necessary orders.
17. 3 Submit entries before Post Office deadline for post office directory after appointed day.
17. 4 Prepare maps of new area and location of offices, etc, for general circulation.
17. 5 Prepare directory of staff and telephone numbers to be ready before appointed day for internal use.
17. 6 Prepare public advertisements of addresses and telephone numbers in the new authority.
17. 7 Plan internal postal delivery system in the new authority.
17. 8 Confirm new postal addresses with Post Office and circulate information to correspondents.
17. 9 Decide on internal and contract printing arrangements. Contract where necessary (see 9.5.7).

### *Setting up the new authorities*

- |       |                                                                                                                     |           |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 17.10 | Design new letter heads and other publicity material and order.                                                     | Page      |
| 17.11 | Staff bulletin (13.3).                                                                                              | 108 – 109 |
| 17.12 | Discuss publicity arrangements with local press to ensure good initial coverage and subsequent close communication. | 126 – 127 |

#### 18 *Data Processing*

“As a guide, at least 18 months is required to plan and put into action a fully integrated financial system” – IMTA South East Associates Report No 3.

- 18. 1 List programming operational or planned to be operational in following two years.
- 18. 2 Decide what integration of programmes is desirable in interim period.
- 18. 3 Work out implications for equipment available or on order.
- 18. 4 Specify new equipment required and accommodation.
- 18. 5 Specify programme development needs.
- 18. 6 Specify staffing required. A computer manager and other key officers should be appointed as soon as possible and given full responsibility. Network analysis of data processing reorganisation. Put in hand necessary orders.
- 18. 7 Arrange necessary training of staff.
- 18. 8 Plan testing and familiarisation with programmes and equipment new to officers concerned before appointed day.

#### 19 *Financial Estimates*

120ff

See *Re-organisation – A Treasurer's Manual*, South East Associates (IMTA) 1970. No attempt is made here to duplicate this work. The following points are included, however, because of their general inter-departmental importance. Detail is deliberately avoided.

- 19. 1 Treasurers' groups for constituent authorities adopt standard form of codification for estimates as early as possible and ask constituent authorities to prepare estimates for final year and a projection of costs for the following year in accordance with this form as far

*Appendix. An agenda for reorganisation*

as possible. Separate estimates should be produced for functions and areas to be 'hived off'.

19. 2 Early appointment of a senior officer to take responsibility for integration of estimates and liaise with constituent authorities on local preparations. Identify inconsistencies, maintain timetable, etc.
19. 3 Constituent authorities submit estimates and projections to treasurer and to other chief officers of new authority. Groups of officers from constituent authorities with treasurer's representative prepare estimates for each service.
19. 4 Integration of estimates.



# Index

*References to items in the Appendix are distinguished by the abbreviations 'App.' and numbers in italics.*

- Accommodation** 23-24, 31ff, 113ff,  
*App. 4.3, 6, 7.1.3, 9.5.17-18, 11.5, 16*
- Advertisement of vacancies 72-73
- Appeals, staff 74ff, *App. 15.6*
- Appointment of staff 22-23, 38, 40,  
46, 59ff, 82-83, *App. 2, 4.6, 6, 9.5.4,*  
*10.4-6, 11.4, 15*
- "Big brother syndrome"** 3-4
- Bonus incentive schemes 76-77,
- Borough status 41, *App. 9.5.19*
- Boundaries 2, 14-15, *App. 3, 7.2.2*
- Capital** programmes 24-26, 30, 120,  
*App. 1-2, 11.8*
- Central government 29, 81, *App. 3*
- Change, impact on councillors and staff  
2, 124-125
- Chief executive 35, 41
- Chief officers  
  appointment 65ff  
  attitudes 100
- Classification of expenditure 121
- Clerk 10, 77, 35, 41, 109, 111, *App.*  
*1.1-4, 2.4, 2.10, 3, 3.3*
- Committee meetings 81
- Committee rooms 115
- Committee structure 21-22, 41, 42-  
44, *App. 7.1.1, 9.5.3, 10.2*
- Compensation 60-61, 64-65
- Communications 116, 119, *App. 17*  
(*See also Staff - Communication*)
- Conditions of service 22-23, 60, 75ff,  
104, *App. 7.1.9, 13*
- Consultation with constituent authori-  
ties 24ff, 44ff, *App. 5, 10.5, 12.2*
- Consultants 38-39, 68, *App. 2.12,*  
*10.12*
- Continuity principle 82
- Co-operation 3-4, 33-34
- Councillors 129ff
- Councils, new 40ff, *App. 9*  
  first meeting 40-41, *App. 9*  
  relationship with constituent autho-  
  rities 44ff
- County, administrative, geographical  
  and legal 17-18
- Data** processing 31, *App. 7.1.10, 18*
- Decentralisation 113ff
- Delegation to officers 71ff, 82, 130-  
131, *App. 10.8*
- Departmental structure 21ff, *App.*  
*7.1.1, 11.1, 14*
- Departments - Establishments 21-22,  
47ff, *App. 11.2*
- Electoral** areas and arrangements  
16-17, *App. 3.3, 7.1.8, 7.2.3, 9.1-2*
- Equipment 31, 34, *App. 7.1.10, 7.1.12,*  
*10.13, 11.6*
- Establishments  
  officer 49-50, 110-111  
  procedures 49ff  
  services 49ff, *App. 11.3*
- Expenditure by constituent authorities  
24-27
- Financial** balances 24-25, *App. 7.2.3*
- Financial planning and estimates 24-  
26, 120ff, *App. 7.1.5-6, 11.8-9, 19*
- Financial transfers 20, *App. 5.4, 7.2.3*
- Furniture removal 118-119, *App.*  
*16.4-9*
- Heads** of department  
  appointment 65-67, *App. 15*  
  attitudes 97-98, 107-108

## Index

- Human relations 33-35, 100-101, 125-126
- Information** needs 31ff, *App. 7.1.3*
- Joint** committees 9ff, *App. 1-6, 7.2.1, 7.2.5-6, 9.5.8*  
 authority 9-10  
 chairman 13, *App. 2.16*  
 communication with constituent authorities and public 28  
 functions 14ff, *App. 2-6*  
 information needs 31-32  
 initiating 10-11, *App. 1*  
 organisation 10-13  
 political organisation 11  
 representation 11-12  
 secretariat 35ff  
 size 11  
 staff 35ff
- Liabilities**, transfer 18ff
- Local Government Operational Research Unit 114
- Management** services 50
- Management structure 47, *App. 4.2, 7.1.1*  
 innovation 47-49
- Morale 83ff, 115
- NALGO** 72-72, 105ff
- Names of local authorities 17-18
- Needs, social 31, *App. 7.1.4*
- Network analysis 5, *App. 7.1.7*
- Objectives** of reorganisation 1
- Officers, action by 30ff, 42, *App. 7, 9.3-4*
- Overtime 83
- Parochialism** 29
- Payment of salaries, etc. 82-83
- Political party organisation 28-29
- Press 126-127, *App. 9.5.12, 17-12*
- Property, transfer of 18-19, *App. 3.8, 7.2.3*
- Public relations 115, 116, 126ff, *App. 10.10, 17*
- Purchase of equipment 26, *App. 12.8*
- Rating** 19-20, 121-122, *App. 7.2.3, 19.4*
- Recruitment 27, 63-64, *App. 5.3*
- Redundancy 61, 63ff
- Reggrading of staff 26-27, 64-65, 71, *App. 5.3*
- Research 6ff, 84-85
- Schools** 172
- Specialisation 96, 129
- Staff**  
 attitudes 83ff  
 bulletins 108, 112  
 communication 102ff, 125-126, *App. 10.7, 13.3, 17.5, 17.11*  
 consultation 102ff, *App. 2, 4.5, 10.7*  
 consultative committees 104ff, 111-112, *App. 2.13, 4.5, 10.3*  
 reactions 83ff  
 survey 27, 31, *App. 4.2, 7.1.2*  
 temporary 56-57  
 transfer *see under* Appointment  
 worries 83ff
- Staff Commission 60ff, 67, 74
- Standing orders 41, *App. 12.6*
- Systems 32-33, *App. 7.1.11*
- Teachers** 127
- Telephone system 116, 119, *App. 7.1.4, 11.7, 17.3-6*
- Time shortage 4-6, 20-21, 40, 46
- Training 128-129, *App. 7.1.15, 15.7, 18.7*
- Voting** 126
- Wastage** 84
- Workload 78ff

The programme for the reform of local government in Britain will involve, in due course, the winding-up of all the existing local authorities in the country, outside London, and they will be replaced by new bodies with different responsibilities. The process will disband the existing administrations to merge their staffs and resources on a scale without precedent—responsibility for the expenditure of nearly 15 per cent of the gross national product will thereby change hands, and about one and a quarter million staff in England alone are to be transferred to new employers.

This, briefly, is the magnitude of the task to be faced by those who manage our local authorities, and the purpose of this handbook is to present a considered analysis of the wide range of human and organisational problems which the authorities have to tackle.

The authors outline the means by which councillors and officers of the existing local authorities can prepare for and carry out the changes, and go on to examine the immediate administrative problems of the new councils in relation to the policies of their forerunners in the transitional period, the difficulties to be overcome in setting up the new administrative structure, the appointment of staff to the new services, indeed the whole range of considerations of resources, staffing and accommodation which a local council will need to take into account.

Particularly important are the sections concerned with the human aspects of change. It is vital that there is sympathetic treatment of the potential fears of the staff who are affected by the changes. The work-load on the individual, methods of explaining the reorganisation process to allay fears, stimulation of a positive approach to change—all these factors should be dealt with by a policy of frank communication and consultation, and then the new authorities can hope to achieve early and successful integration. In this context the book includes a valuable appendix, which sets out systematically a programme of action to serve as a checklist and guide to the central management tasks at local level.

This handbook, the product of extensive investigations into local government reorganisation in the 1960s, and consultations with elected members and officers who have experienced amalgamation and change in their authorities, provides an invaluable guide to the problems on hand. But, according to the authors, if the aim of a more effective local government system is to be realised, the success of the operation depends more than anything else on how well the changes are managed locally.

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